BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES


The Civil War period is one of intense interest to Pennsylvania historians. Not only was one of the great battles of the war fought on the soil of the Commonwealth, but its interests were deeply involved and its prominent citizens played significant parts. The two books here reviewed deserve the close attention of all interested in this emotional period.

*America's Tragedy* is presented by a noted historical writer, who in recent years has devoted himself to the production of popular history. Within the compass of this book, he endeavors to reach back to the very beginnings of American society to find the origin of the Civil War. He adopts the theory that the tragedy resulted from the development of two contrasting civilizations which engendered antipathies and fears, resulting in bloodshed. He not only unravels the chain of events but interprets them in line with the latest sociological and psychological theories. The first half of the book deals with the growth of sectionalism; the second contains a moving story of the war and a final chapter devoted to the tragedy of reconstruction. The book is admirable "popular" history, but it illustrates what Pennsylvanians are so frequently reminded of, namely the lack of attention to Pennsylvania's place in this conflict.

In Mr. Adams' work, one looks in vain for a discussion of Pennsylvania's peculiar interest. The Commonwealth in many ways was the pivotal state and its interests were decisive. After the panic of 1857, Pennsylvania manufacturers convinced themselves, and succeeded in convincing the voters, that a protective tariff was the great remedy for the ills of the state. The conviction caused Pennsylvania to cast its vote for Lincoln, and his election brought the Civil War. Had Pennsylvania refused to choose Republican electors, New Jersey would probably have likewise refused, as their interests were close and in that event Lincoln would have been defeated. More attention to conditions in the Middle States, separate from those in New England and the Middle West, is therefore appropriate.

The second volume is an able piece of dramatic writing. Its author is a genius for discovering historical material and has the great credit for finding the "destroyed" Douglas papers. His work is an extended biographical treatment of the last decade of Stephen A. Douglas' life based upon the voluminous papers which he unearthed. He describes very vividly the part played by Douglas in the approach of the Civil War and develops the thesis that the conflict was produced by political ballyhoo and the
clashing ambitions and hates of politicians. Douglas, the author thinks, was the only leader who could possibly have harmonized the difficulties, but his great mission was frustrated by the pettiness of politicians. Douglas is frankly the hero of this drama and where there is a hero there must be a villain. For this thankless role, a Pennsylvanian, James Buchanan, has been cast. To those interested in Pennsylvania the question arises: “Was he really the villain of the play?”

In both of these works the presidency of James Buchanan is treated cavalierly. Mr. Milton makes him the villain, relentlessly pursuing the valiant Douglas and by his mad hatred destroying his chances of saving the nation from secession and war. Mr. Adams, too, is severe. “Perhaps no other President has ever shown himself so weak as Buchanan,” he says, and characterizes him further with such phrases as “the imbecility of Buchanan,” “a pitiable figure,” etc. Space does not permit an extended discussion of Buchanan’s part in the tragedy, but no political leader is ever the man portrayed by his enemies. While Buchanan might appear to Douglas as a wicked and vindictive foe who sought to condone a fraud for the benefit of the south and incidentally ruin a dangerous rival, on the other hand, to Buchanan, Douglas appeared as a rebellious younger Senator who was so intent upon the presidency as to jeopardize the Democratic party in order to maintain his hold upon his constituency. As to the pitiable weakness and imbecility of Mr. Adams’ figure, it must be remembered that Buchanan spent much of his life as a diplomat and that he elected to try the arts of diplomacy to prevent bloodshed. In so doing he evolved a policy which Lincoln himself vainly sought to follow until the force of events moved him to sterner measures.

Volumes as well-written and as stimulating as these are valuable not only for the contributions they make, but also for the objections they raise. They merit wide reading.

ROY F. NICHOLS.

*Deism in Eighteenth Century America.* By Herbert M. Morais. (*Studies in History, Economics and Public Law,* Number 397. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934. Pp. 203. $3.50). This work is a much needed contribution to the intellectual and religious history of the eighteenth century. Following an excellent survey of the general character of deism in Europe, Dr. Morais traces its transit to America, 1713-1805, showing that the English rather than the French brand of deism took root in the New World. Most early colonial deists, like Franklin and William Smith, eagerly adopted the new religion of Nature, but prudently kept it from the common man lest undesirable social consequences might result. In the colonies deism remained a cult of the “enlightened” intellectuals centering chiefly in the seaboard towns. During the Revolution the deists became somewhat bolder in tone, and in 1784 Ethan Allen published *Reason, the Only Oracle of Man.* The movement soon became militantly anti-clerical, because of the efforts of the ministry to link deism with atheism. Inspired by Tom Paine and organized by Elihu
Palmer of Philadelphia, deistic societies sprang up and established free-thinking newspapers to spread “glad tidings of the new day.” This aggressiveness produced a two-headed reaction: a return to orthodoxy among the gentry of the east; and among the masses a wave of religious emotion culminating in the Great Revival of 1800.

Students of Pennsylvania history will be interested to find Philadelphia the leading center of deism. From a cautious beginning with Franklin and Sir William Keith, the cult became militant under Elihu Palmer and Elhanan Winchester, so that when John Fitch of steamboat fame organized the Universal Society in 1790, Penn’s city had earned the dubious honor of being the “center of infidelity.”

The author has covered thoroughly a large literature which he lists in his bibliography. His emphasis is on the northern and middle colonies; circumstances prevented more extensive work on the south. This is unfortunate, since the reviewer believes that the files of the Charleston newspapers would yield a considerable body of material on deism. In fact, a more extensive use of all colonial newspapers would probably lead Dr. Morais to soften his pronouncement about the exclusively aristocratic nature of the movement before 1776. The members of Franklin’s freethinking Junto were artisans, and in 1738 the editor of the South Carolina Gazette, indulging in a much-discussed religious controversy, wrote of his “resignation to the Will of the Supreme Author of the Universe.” In the towns, at least, the middle and lower classes, frequently came into contact with the idea of Nature and Nature’s God.

CARL BRIDENBAUGH


This book consists of an address delivered before historical societies in Stroudsburg, Nazareth and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, together with more than fifty pages of notes and data gathered during the period in which the address was being prepared.

In the first part of the address Mr. Hillman traces the history of the pioneer settlements in the vicinity of the present city of Stroudsburg, with particular emphasis upon the story of the town which Daniel Brodhead laid out at the junction of the Analomink (later Brodhead’s) and Pocono creeks, in 1735, and called Dansbury, after himself. An excellent map of the town, as it was in 1755, with a number of the streets of present day Stroudsburg superimposed upon it is valuable in showing the exact location of the early settlement, as it relates to the present day city. Mr. Hillman sketches the history of the town from 1735 to 1806, when the name Dansbury gave way to Stroudsburg.

The second part of the address deals with the Moravian Mission which was established at the junction of Brodhead’s and McMichael’s creeks, in 1743, on land donated by Daniel Brodhead. The history of this mission is, as Mr. Hillman rightly observes, “a tremendous tale of hardship, self
The infamous "Walking Purchase" of 1737 had aroused in the Indian heart a bitter hatred of all whites. The average white settler of that period paid back in kind, consequently the friendly evangelism of the Moravians among the Indians brought them into great disfavor. But the Moravians were accustomed to persecution; in spite of it the work would undoubtedly have gone on if it had not been for persistent Indian raids, which resulted in the burning of the mission buildings in 1755, and the gradual destruction of the homes of most of the members of the mission. For a time white settlers practically abandoned the community, and the work of the mission came to an end.

The second half of Mr. Hillman's book consists of abstracts relating to the Mission, as well as biographical and geographical notes of considerable value to students of local history and genealogy. Copies of a few historical papers are also included.

A. W. SCHATTSCHEINDE.


This report, as its title indicates, is a record and study of petroglyphs near Safe Harbor in an area now, for the most part, covered by water. As such, it forms a valuable archaeological contribution to the prehistory of Pennsylvania. The reproductions of individual petroglyphs are numerous and detailed; the photographs are excellent. The author has apparently spared no pains to make this study as complete as possible, including a bibliography of unusual thoroughness.

In his zest for the subject, however, we feel that Mr. Cadzow has been tempted occasionally to wander far afield. On page 28, for example, he calls attention to the fact that some of these pictographs "bear a resemblance, perhaps fortuitous" to certain Chinese characters. The reviewer is informed by Mr. T. F. Tachibana and Mr. P. Yang, Oriental students at the University of Pennsylvania, that only by considerable distortion can certain of these figures be made to approximate Chinese ideograms of any period. It would seem, in addition, that where the resemblance is at first sight marked, the ideogram is of an unusually simple nature which might easily be duplicated by the vagaries of chance. While Mr. Cadzow has been cautious in his conclusions, we question the wisdom of discoursing in this way upon a subject so easily misconstrued by the lay reader. It is also admissible that such an anthropological heresy as: "Mentally the Algonkian were inferior [to the Iroquois]" (page 44), deserves a frown. As for the rest, excepting interpretations, which are bound to differ owing to the uncertainties confronting students of the subject, this little volume amply deserves a place on the shelves of all students of local prehistory. We only urge that it be read with discrimination.

LOREN EISLEY.
Real estate titles that had their inception during the colonial period of our history are always interesting. That of 208 South Fourth Street, Philadelphia, is no exception. By following the fortunes of this property as it found its way into the hands of various Philadelphia families, Mr. Lewis has presented many delightful chapters in local history. Searching the records for his information, he has produced a work that is of particular interest to many families whose forbears took an active part in the development of the city of Philadelphia. The value of the book is further enhanced by the incorporation of a large number of pictures depicting scenes long since removed from Philadelphia, which are always of interest to the historically minded.

VICTOR L. JOHNSON.