

BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

Edited by JAMES A. BARNES

Temple University

The Constitution Reconsidered. Edited for the American Historical Association by Conyers Read. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938. Pp. xviii, 424. \$3.75.)

This volume with all it represents is in the nature of a phenomenon. It attests the extraordinary place which the Constitution occupies in the American social mind, and it would not exist but for the unprecedented action of the American Historical Association in devoting a full annual program, lock, stock, and barrel, to the history and implications of the "document" of 1787. To review such a book is difficult; it is like reviewing an encyclopedia. At the outset it must be said that the historians' achievement at Philadelphia in December 1937 was notable and that the book deserves to be read in full with the greatest care. The Constitution has been reconsidered by twenty-six scholars under three heads: (1) Origins and background are treated by McIlwaine, Thorne, Stephenson, Pargellis, McIver, Read, Nef, Salvemini, Bainton, Haller and Schneider. (2) The more immediate aspects of the Constitution and its American setting are taken up by Beard, Hamilton, Lerner, Elliott, Commager, and Gabriel. (3) Finally, the repercussions of the Constitution outside the United States are discussed by Bruun, Binkley, Holborn, Whitelaw, Wright, De Kiewiet, Haring, Mecham, and Martin. For the better tying together of these essays the volume begins with an introduction by Walton H. Hamilton and ends with Carl Becker's afterthoughts. The whole is under the competent editorship of Conyers Read.

Each of the contributions deserves its own review, for the essays are not padded nor discursive; they are compact with information, stimulus, suggestion, interpretation, and even entertainment. If one were to pick out a passage as a kind of direction-finder it might well be the statement, or restatement, by C. A. Beard of the importance of time and place, interest and motive, in the discussions of the Constitution that we have had in the past. What we have had in constitutional historiography is something very different from treating the Constitution "exactly as it had been," for "... every discussion of the Constitution proceeds on some level of competence, with reference to some conception or conceptions; it is carried on by particular persons at a given moment and in a given place. It is not timeless, placeless, unearthly, omniscient" (p. 159). There has been something purposeful in historical accounts of the

Constitution just as there has been social and economic purpose in those important "judicial" decisions by which the Constitution has become implemented in American affairs. If the reader begins with Beard, he may range through the book with greater profit.

Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of the historians appears in redrawing the background of the Constitution. Among the many elements in this background we have mercantilism, the age of reason, natural rights, Cokian suggestions of a higher law, the slow evolution of representative government (less associated with the jury system than has been supposed), economic motive in the limitation of royal prerogative, Miltonian puritanism, eighteenth-century concepts, theories as to checks and balances (the "equipoise of equal powers" [p. 49]), and those understandings by which the fundamental instrument was loaded in favor of wealth and influence. Anyone who starts to tell what the Constitution "embodies" will assuredly have a large order to fill.

The inception and application of the Constitution is treated by the various writers very much in the Beard spirit. Always the social and economic setting is held in view, though ten years ago that was by no means common in constitutional discussion. Overlooking its far-reaching social implications, some historians have even belittled constitutional history and treated it as a thing to be avoided. To suppose that modern judicial applications were inherent in the Constitution as written would be a pretty wild assumption. On the matter of "due process," for example, it is pointed out that a "constitutional doctrine contrived to protect the natural rights of men against corporate monopoly was . . . commuted into a formula for safeguarding the domain of business against the regulatory power of the state" (p. 187). In this connection we have fortunately in these pages a sane treatment of the San Mateo case and an exposure of the "lack of authority" (p. 181) for the Conkling "revelation" as to the alleged "purpose" of the "framers" in regard to the corporate meaning of the word "person" in the imperfectly understood fourteenth amendment. The ideology and premises of judicial review are analyzed, the historic course of judicial legislation being so presented as to make the whole movement "grotesquely tragic" (p. 195). That the Constitution has become a species of "social myth" (pp. 209-224) is confidently postulated, nor is the "myth" without personification in the "founding fathers." In its implementing the impressive doctrine of the higher law, as Commager shows, has attained importance largely by meanings read in, or dragged in, and corporation lawyers have had something to do with the dragging.

The latter part of the book deals with American constitutional influences, such as they have been, in other lands. Latin America, British dominions, and selected European systems are treated, but the total of the American contribution appears, at least to the present reviewer, comparatively small. The word Czechoslovakia does not appear in the index. If only as an antiquarian matter, this is unfortunate. The omission of the Czech nation in a book of such wide content is, however, dismally appropriate, so far has the abdication of democracy gone in this bedeviled world.

The Constitution Reconsidered should take its place in every law school as well as every general and college library. Without this historical interpretation and these social implications constitutional law becomes a kind of window dressing. The only things to be regretted are that the general reader is not given a "who's who" of contributors, and that pertinent essays by Max Farrand, E. S. Corwin, and F. S. Philbrick are omitted.

The University of Illinois

J. G. RANDALL.

Pen Pictures of Early Western Pennsylvania. Edited by John W. Harpster. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1938. Pp. 337. Maps and Illustrations by Harvey Cushman. \$3.50.)

No type of material is so useful for the study of social history as the literature of travel, and none has been so neglected by historians. This is partly because social history itself is just now coming into its own, and partly because of the difficult problem of interpretation which one faces when he makes use of accounts left by travelers. The prejudices of the traveler are almost invariably written into his work, and interpretations of social conditions are especially liable to be impressionistic. It is necessary therefore to know something of the author and his point of view before one can make any valid use of his work, and this places a heavy responsibility upon the historian.

Perhaps the only way in which one may largely overcome this difficulty is to bring together a considerable number of accounts dealing with the same period and region. Thus by obtaining several points of view, one may arrive at something approaching an accurate picture. *Pen Pictures of Early Western Pennsylvania*, edited by John W. Harpster, is a collection which admirably serves this purpose. It covers the years from 1748 until 1830 and enables the reader to visualize the development of the Pittsburgh area from the time when it was a wilderness inhabited only by Indians and wild beasts until it became the commercial center of our early West. There is no way in which we could get a more vivid impression of this development than through the eyes of those who actually observed it—observed it usually as transients, alert to all that was new and unusual. The almost incredible hardships of frontier travel and frontier life give us a real respect for the fortitude of those who first occupied the land; the phonetic spelling of some of the writers affords us a fair idea of the English language as it was once spoken by the less sophisticated of our people; and the information regarding the settlers gives us a chance to check prevalent theories of frontier development. One point upon which there is substantial agreement among the observers is that the early population of Pittsburgh did not compare favorably with that of long-settled communities. That the people were lazy, dirty, and boisterous is hardly to be denied in the face of the evidence. After the building of the Cumberland Road and the emergence from frontier conditions one finds not only physical improvements but an improvement in the population as well. Travelers began to observe neatness and industry. This tends to support the view that the frontier was settled

in the main by men from the lower rather than from the upper strata of society. Yet Pittsburgh was hardly a typical community in that trade rather than agriculture was always the important factor in its development. A similar view of a strictly agricultural frontier would probably furnish an interesting contrast.

Mr. Harpster has done an excellent piece of editing. The selections are chosen with keen discrimination; all significant persons and places are identified in footnotes; a map of the region enables the reader to follow the trails of the pioneers; and a comprehensive bibliography supplements the selections given in the text. All of the travels included have been previously published, but many would be inaccessible to the average reader. The University of Pittsburgh Press has presented the book in an attractive format, which adds to the pleasure of reading a picturesque and highly informative series of documents.

University of Virginia

THOMAS PERKINS ABERNETHY.

Monongahela: The River and Its Region. By Richard T. Wiley. (Butler, Penna.: The Ziegler Company, 1937. Pp. ii, 257. \$3.00.)

Dr. Richard T. Wiley in his small volume, *Monongahela: The River and Its Region*, states in the introduction that "The aim has been to treat the many interesting phases of the region's history in a popular rather than a critical way—to recount these activities of the several periods in a manner acquired by a lifetime in journalism, rather than tracing origins and authorities for every statement made" (p. 8). The author fully accomplishes this aim. The book, dealing with a river and a region both significant and interesting, abounds in tales of Indians, early settlers, rivermen plying their trade, boatbuilding, industrial development, and anecdotes of the inhabitants. In fact, the title of the final chapter, "The River in Story and Song," might well be used as a title for this volume on the Monongahela River.

The work, devoting 235 pages to actual text, includes twenty-six short chapters and thirty-five insertions listed under the caption "Random Notes and Anecdotes." The first nine chapters deal with the Monongahela country's environment, topography, early settlement, regional disputes, Indian wars, and Whiskey Insurrection. Chapters X to XX inclusive trace the evolution of boatbuilding and river navigation from the bark canoe to the modern river steamer. Flatboats, keelboats, ocean-going vessels, steamboats—all were manufactured along the Monongahela and operated on it; from the river towns of Brownsville, Elizabeth, McKeesport, and Pittsburgh they began their journeys down the Ohio and the Mississippi and even to the ocean ports of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. The keelboats and steamboats, the latter manufactured from 1811 on, required the improvement of the channels of the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers, tasks which the author treats in a general way. The later chapters touch briefly on the manufacturing, railroads, personages, and literary products of the region.

Dr. Wiley, long a newspaper editor in the heart of the section which he depicts, is steeped in its history and in the lore of the river boatmen. He has produced a pleasant and interesting general account of the "Monongahela country." The work is not exhaustive; it is not documented; and it is not particularly well organized, with the result that many instances of redundancy exists. Furthermore, the book lacks maps and illustrations. The author, however, is not uncritical, even in relating the many anecdotes which give atmosphere to the region and its times. He has succeeded in his aim to appeal to the popular reader, and he has given students of western Pennsylvania history an additional source of information on the Monongahela River and its region.

University of Pittsburgh

R. J. FERGUSON.

In French Creek Valley. By John Earle Reynolds. (Meadville, Penna.: The Tribune Publishing Company. Published for the Crawford County Historical Society, 1938. Pp. 352. Illustrations. \$3.50.)

Students of western Pennsylvania history have known for some time that the members of the Reynolds family of Meadville had in their possession a valuable collection of documents relating to the early history of northwestern Pennsylvania. But not until the past few years have the contents of this collection become known. Professor R. J. Ferguson of the University of Pittsburgh deserves much credit in enlisting the coöperation of the author of this volume to make these records available to research workers. Professor Ferguson had an open door to the collection when gathering material for his recent volume, *Early Western Pennsylvania Politics* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1938). He and others have continually encouraged Mr. Reynolds, who had already made a beginning, to bring out this volume dealing with the development of French Creek Valley and incorporate in it those documents and papers of his private collection which throw some light upon the history of this region. The volume before us attempts to do that very thing. And, let it be said, the author has rendered a valuable service.

The opening chapter deals with Washington's journey of 1753. From the original maps and from Washington's own *Journal* the author allows the reader to retrace this journey in detail. The editorial comments, sprinkled throughout, serve to clear up some doubtful points, acquaint the reader with the present locations, and offer a brief review of the history of the places visited by Washington. Then in rapid order come chapters on the founding of Meadville, taken from Gen. David Mead's testimony as given in the Holland Land Company case in 1802; Early Home Life, and Farm Life, taken from John Reynold's "Reminiscences"; Rivers and Roads, from Major Ebenezer Denny's account as set forth in his *Military Journal* of 1793; a chapter on the building of keelboats and flat boats, an account of early tradesmen such as saddlers, shoemakers, journeyman tailors, clothiers, coopers—all accounts being taken from the early files of the local newspaper.

One of the most interesting chapters, which would have to be incorporated in any local history of French Creek Valley, deals with the Holland Land Company. The activities of this company, however worthy or unworthy they may have been, "made our young nation aware of the great value of the state of Pennsylvania" (p. 114). Likewise, there is a good account of the arrival of Timothy Alden, founder and first president of Allegheny College. One chapter recounts the visits of famous persons, such as Joseph Bonaparte, Audubon (recited from his own reminiscence), Lafayette, Presidents Zachary Taylor and James Buchanan, and yes, Tom Thumb. Of course no regional history would be complete without a narrative dealing with its military record. In *French Creek Valley* is no exception. The region of Pennsylvania dealt with sending forth its quota and more to the Indian wars of 1793-94 and the War of 1812.

A chapter on David Dick, inventor of Dick's anti-friction press and recipient of the Council Medal at the London Exposition in 1851 and a dozen or more honors, is included. The climax in this unusual volume comes in the last chapter. It is entitled "An Historic Letter." The incident that leaves one in animated suspense is much too long to relate here in detail. But one wonders how and why John Mifflin's (Philadelphia) Day Book and Washington's three-page letter dated to General Ewing, December 14, 1776, never turned up until the summer of 1937—and still more strange, why did they turn up way out here in northwestern Pennsylvania!

University of Pittsburgh

JOHN W. OLIVER.

Minstrels of the Mine Patch. By George Korson. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938. Pp. 332. \$3.00.)

This book, whose sub-title is *Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry*, is a valuable contribution to the social history of Pennsylvania. Describing the songs and legends of the anthracite miners, it is full of color and atmosphere. The author has given us a more complete and sympathetic understanding of the inner life of the miners, their humor, pathos, and tragedy, than the reviewer has found anywhere else. He has uncovered a rich vein of American folklore, hitherto undiscovered or but slightly worked, and in the doing of it has added considerably to our knowledge of the subject.

The material for this delightful work was collected at first hand by Mr. Korson, who traveled through the mining communities, talking to old timers and following up elusive clues with such success as to be able not only to acquaint himself thoroughly with their songs and stories, but also to describe with real insight the colorful background of which they were the spontaneous outgrowth. The personal characteristics of the miners, together with their diversions, struggles, and tragedies, are reflected in their songs and legends, the background of which is given by the author in a way to make them more understandable to the reader. Practically every phase of the miner's life is depicted in this manner, unique in the story of the coal fields.

Most of the songs are of Irish derivation, but some are of Welsh and Slavic origin. As ballads of the "mine patch," they are not in themselves

noteworthy, but as a revelation of the thoughts and feelings of the miners they are of great significance. Though their intrinsic value may be small, they nevertheless breathe the spirit of coal fields in simple, unaffected language; and Mr. Korson's keen analysis and interpretative descriptions furnish just the introduction to them that is needed.

The format of the book is good, the index satisfactory, and the bibliography helpful. The author attempted a rather difficult task in producing this book, but he has succeeded admirably. It is a work of real merit and will doubtless receive the wide acceptance which it deserves.

Pennsylvania State College

WAYLAND F. DUNAWAY.

The Moravian Indian Mission on White River: Diaries and Letters, May 5, 1799, to November 12, 1806. (Indiana Historical Collections, XXIII.)

Edited by Lawrence Henry Gipson. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1938. Pp. xv, 674. Illustrated. \$2.00.)

This book, whose real authors have long since died, is the product of several minds. It is a collection of documents translated from the German and edited for the use of English-speaking students. The translations were made by Harry E. Stocker, Herman T. Frueauff, and Samuel C. Zeller. The foreword was written by Christopher B. Coleman, director of the Indiana Historical Bureau, and the editing was done by Lawrence Henry Gipson, who also contributed the preface and an introduction which, though compressed within severely restricted limits, gives the documentary material an admirable setting.

Students of history will not appraise this book uniformly. Some will consider it a minor contribution to the history of the relations of white men and red men in the New World; others will regard it as a lesser episode in the history of the expansion of Protestant Christianity in modern times; and still others (doubtless the largest group) will look upon it as source material for an illuminating chapter of the history of the Moravian denomination in North America. But from whatever angle it may be viewed, the book cannot help evoking expressions of approval. To be sure, it does not illumine a large portion of human history. Yet it discloses work of the sort that ought everywhere to be encouraged. It is work of this sort that gradually pushes out the frontiers of historical knowledge. It is much work of this sort that prepares the way for the satisfactory historical narrative.

The illustrations of this review are such as to preclude a detailed analysis of the book. In general, as the title page indicates, the contents consist of diaries and letters which pertain to the Moravian Mission on White River in Indiana, and which cover the period from May 5, 1799, to November 12, 1806. But such general statements leave some things unsaid. Within the covers of the book are two significant "addresses" from Moravian missionaries, one to Governor William Henry Harrison and the other to Governor Arthur St. Clair. Also included in the book are brief autobiographies of two Moravian missionaries, John Peter Kluge and Abraham Luckenbach,

whose names appear frequently in the documents. An index of thirty-two pages concludes the book.

To such persons as are acquainted with the scholarship of Dr. Gipson it would be superfluous to say that this volume is well edited. To the task assigned him he brought exceptional qualifications, by reason both of present situation and of past experience. Before coming to Lehigh University in Bethlehem, he taught for several years in Wabash College in Indiana. In Bethlehem he has had easy access to the archives of the Moravian Church, and in Indiana he came to know the land of the White River Mission. He has profited by his opportunities. In the introduction he has summarized with consummate skill a great chapter of Moravian history, and in the footnotes he has included a select bibliography that will put the ambitious student in the way of acquiring a satisfactory knowledge of the missionary efforts of a denomination whose contribution to the spread of Christianity in the New World has been out of all proportion to the size of its membership. The Moravian Church has been emphatically a missionary church. Its early missionaries to heathen peoples were self-denying pioneers whose sacrifices have not been lost on other Christian peoples. One need not penetrate very deeply into modern missionary literature to discover that the other Protestant denominations have set great store by the Moravian example.

As an illustration of the bookmaker's art, this volume is to be commended. The format is attractive. Printed in large, clear type on paper of good quality, the volume invites perusal. It is a production of which both Indiana and Pennsylvania can be proud.

Bucknell University

J. ORIN OLIPHANT.