
The first use of the secret-service papers of the Revolutionary period has enabled Mr. Van Doren to tell his story in considerable measure in the “actual words of the characters” and to give “in full detail a part of our heritage that was previously only scattered incident and loose suspicion.”

The treasonable conspiracy of Benedict Arnold forms the major portion of this work. It appears clearly from his first appearance as a public man that Arnold possessed certain traits of character which were bound almost inevitably to lead to catastrophe. Extreme avarice begot a moral obtuseness which rendered him unconscious of any obliquity of conduct in seeking his ends. At the same time his hypersensitivity to the criticism which his acts constantly invited developed in him a persecution complex which led him to pose habitually as the wronged patriot who had made unlimited sacrifices for his country only to reap false accusations as his reward.

It is not impossible that Arnold deceived himself as well as others. His customary thinking is well illustrated by his defense when court-martialed for acts done while in command of the troops near Philadelphia. Evidence now uncovered reveals various shady performances, such as trading with the enemy for personal profit; but Arnold played his role of persecuted patriot so skillfully that he escaped with a nominal penalty.

Smarting nevertheless under a sense of injury and evidently hoping for a large reward, he approached the British commander on his own initiative with a scheme to betray the American cause—a scheme, at first inchoate, which eventuated in the effort to deliver the positions on the upper Hudson. Later Arnold justified his conduct by asserting that he had always believed the welfare of America required reunion with Britain and that he had sought to end the effusion of blood. These statements were utterly at variance with attitudes professed earlier. Naturally he omitted mention of the hope of pecuniary gain. In fact, he always regarded the monetary rewards received as inadequate compensation for his risks and the loss of his property in America.

Arnold as we now view him is no different from Arnold according to our old concept of him. We merely see him in clearer light than before. Even now, perhaps, he cannot be more accurately described than in the words of
Washington. Contrary to the opinion held by some contemporaries after the treason came to light that Arnold must be "undergoing the torments of a mental hell," Washington declared: "He wants feeling! ... He seems to have been hackneyed in villainy, and so lost to all sense of honour and shame that while his faculties will enable him to continue his sordid pursuits there will be no time for remorse." (page 271)

Perhaps sufficient data are now at hand to enable a psychoanalyst to diagnose Arnold's case and explain it in modern scientific language. It is clearly a psychopathological one—maybe at base pathological; the eternal restlessness of the man suggests a glandular disorder. At any rate, we now have the full story of his aberrant career. We have also strong reason to believe that his wife "Peggy" (probably another psychopathological case) was party to the conspiracy from its inception.

While the main interest in the volume turns on the Arnold story, its historical importance lies even more in its revelation of the secret methods pursued (especially by the British), of the numerous efforts made to feel out patriot leaders, and of the sentiments of loyalists. The more active among the loyalists evolved, indeed, a formula expressive of their attitude and program after independence was declared. To them independence and the French connection threatened American welfare, which called instead for reunion with the British empire. This view was one which might be honestly held and acted upon. It, rather than British seduction, won over a few patriots who were discouraged by the misfortunes of war, but it sometimes led to activities which the patriots could regard only as treasonable. History, however, will ever distinguish between honest loyalist hostility to the patriot cause and treason, like Arnold's, associated with pecuniary reward.

The Ohio State University

HOMER C. HOCKETT


This is the first full-length portrait of Anthony Wayne, not only the most dashing and romantic figure of the Revolution but also one of the chief military figures. For the first time advantage has been taken of the large collection of correspondence and other papers found in Wayne's home, Waynesborough. His career is followed from his activities as a boy land agent in Nova Scotia until his death in 1796, after his victory at Fallen Timbers had opened the Northwest to American settlement.

The career which was packed into the intervening years found its keynote in action; few men have portrayed more completely that peculiarly Anglo-Saxon characteristic. Wayne was little given to reading or reflection; the arts—except the theater—bored him; and when he was not occupied with war, he tended to lose his morale. The intervals between campaigns, with which the volume is necessarily partly concerned, apparently were passed pretty much with the aid of wine and women and quarrels with brother officers. Indeed, Wayne must have been a noisy, domineering person, jovial and contentious by turns, thick-skinned toward others and thin-skinned
where his own "honor" was concerned. There are unforgettable pictures here of "Mad Anthony" Wayne pulling the noses of those who refused to obey orders and wresting the rules of war in order to save his favorites from well-merited punishment. Wayne must have had an overwhelming personality, for he was able to live down the disreputable side of his career and stand in history as a good soldier. Doubtless his carefully planned Ohio campaign is a large factor in this recognition. Wayne's chief virtue was his ability to get things done, no mean faculty in an army that was honey-combed with jealousies and Fabianism.

The general reader will find this book eminently satisfactory in its well-rounded and fearless portraiture of a very human individual. The wealth of intimate detail does not make for flagging of interest or movement; if anything the pace is at times too breathless. The professional historian who looks on the work as a purely factual biography will find two criticisms: Wayne's development as an individual and a soldier is obscured by the very abundance of detail, and the author has a tendency to read into Wayne's mind thoughts which seem so concise that it would have been well to back them with authorities. At the end of the volume are excellent notes which could not well have been made more specific since they deal largely with unpublished materials.

University of Pittsburgh

LELAND D. BALDWIN


This study of the career of Charles Williamson, international business man of the late eighteenth century, begins with the hectic efforts of American land speculators such as Robert Morris to coax British capitalists into relieving them, at a profit, of some of their too extensive holdings. To this group of Federalists, at least, the possibility of British investment was the best reason for the Hamiltonian emphasis on Anglo-American friendship. Quite aside from the interests of the merchants or shippers in protecting friendly trade, Hamilton himself recognized that only with British capital could the American dreams of great internal business development be speedily converted into reality.

When Sir William Pulteney and associates purchased Morris' Genesee lands for £75,000, one such dream seemed about to come true. Between 1791 and 1800 there passed through the hands of the association agent, Charles Williamson, 185,000 British pounds for the development of the American back country. The results were highly beneficial to New York state and to a lesser degree to Pennsylvania, but for Sir William Pulteney at Bath the transaction was merely an expensive education in the problems of colony building that had changed but little from the days of the first Virginia Company.

It is understandable that a land promoter should wish to make some profit during his own lifetime, to realize a net return within five or ten
years, and that a local colonizing agent should want to make a reputation and wealth for himself within the period of his labors. Yet in developing a new area which has no readily exportable raw materials these goals are practically unattainable. A net return from Genesee lands could come only from cash sales to prosperous settlers or from the export of lumber, farm produce, and liquor. The general lack of mobile wealth in the United States and the great number of competing land ventures made cash sales difficult to transact, and shortage of labor and lack of transportation made exporting virtually impossible. Williamson's attempted solution, probably the only feasible one, was to invest heavily in improvements such as roads, mills, distilleries, and taverns. This procedure was "hothouse" development, a forcing of natural growth, but perhaps in no other way could the wilderness be converted into an exporting business community within the course of a few years.

Undoubtedly Williamson's methods were wasteful. His imagination was given more to enthusiasm than to critical evaluation; but this is a usual quality of the salesman, and selling was at least half his job. Sir William went along with the spending policy for ten years before becoming discouraged in his hope of quick success. Then as no net returns appeared and his own finances became somewhat strained, he installed an economy regime under the guidance of a prosaic Albany lawyer, Robert Troop. Ultimately this venture in one of America's richest farming areas brought in profits, but not during the agency of Charles Williamson or the lifetime of Sir William Pulteney.

Williamson spent the last half-dozen years of his life in England, where, fortified by his social position and an inheritance from his father, he made unceasing efforts to heal the widening breach in "the arch of Anglo-American friendship." In 1808 on the return voyage from a special diplomatic errand to the West Indies he died from his annually recurring attack of "Genesee fever."

Miss Cowan's book is highly readable and full of valuable details concerning the manners and customs of the times. As business biography, however, it is somewhat deficient in structure and interpretation. From this standpoint it would gain from more analysis and less purely descriptive detail. Since Williamson's daybook and the Pulteney estate papers apparently include the essential ledgers and accounts, it might have been possible to insert at proper intervals in the narrative orderly summaries of annual income, outgoing sales, and mortgages. One cannot get a fair picture of the "mistakes" starting in 1796 without some estimate, at least, of the total financial picture and prospects as of that year and some discussion of the effects expected from the federal statute doubling the price of government land. The effort to give dramatic character to the narrative is hindered by overlapping in chronology in chapters seven and eleven.

These and other possible minor criticisms should not detract too much from a sound and useful piece of scholarship. When the work of other American business pioneers has been as ably recorded as that of Charles
Williamson, we shall have the basis for a fresh and realistic approach to the early development of the United States.

New York University

THOMAS C. COCHRAN


Barnie F. Winkelman’s John G. Johnson is a biography of engrossing interest to lawyers and art connoisseurs and will hold the attention of local historians as well. The opening chapters are devoted to historical background. Mr. Winkelman pictures the Chestnut Hill of the 1840’s as a quiet, peaceful, self-contained village. Throughout the country the economic revival of the “roaring forties” which followed the depression of the thirties was showing its effects. State banks which had survived the crisis were again functioning; the gargantuan infant Big Industry was voicing its “natal wail”; gas lighting, street paving, turnpikes, canals, and railroads were in the ascendency. People vehemently discussed slavery and abolition, and the Millerite movement and the last day of judgment held public attention and general credence. Van Buren had been retired from the presidency, and William Henry Harrison had his brief stay in the White House. Revolutions in Europe with their attendant famine and disorder were sending Germans and Irishmen to America in great numbers. Toward the end of the forties the California gold craze seized the whole country, including the little community of Chestnut Hill. Sudden wealth, due primarily to the development of new industries and the expansion of old ones, appeared on all sides.

Such was the decade in which John G. Johnson, born on April 4, 1841, the day President Harrison passed away, spent his early youth. But for its growing size and the common sense of the mother, implies Mr. Winkelman, the Johnson family would have been lured westward by the rumors of California gold.

The biographer pictures his subject as a legal genius, expert in all branches of the law, with an insatiable zeal and interest in his profession and an uncanny ability to sense and concentrate on vital points. He traces his career as the acknowledged leader of the American bar, the dynamic personality who added new luster and eminence to the renown of the Philadelphia bar and the Philadelphia lawyer. A master in forensic presentation of his cases and on proper occasion a listener of consummate skill, Johnson could analyze and explain intricate problems clearly and simply. He is a model for the practicing lawyer, young and old. Besides his devotion to his family he had only one avocational interest—art; he is credited with assembling one of America’s truly great collections, accumulated solely on his own profound appreciation without assistance of professional connoisseurs. His life is of perennial interest, and his biography, presented in lucid and engaging style, is an adequate portrayal of the man in the setting of his time.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

LEIGHTON P. STRADLEY

This little book, a much too condensed sketch of a very unusual career, is a biography of a western Pennsylvanian of Ulster descent whose life exemplifies the restless, turbulent, and expansive spirit of the middle nineteenth century. After a brief career as a school teacher John White Geary, who had some proficiency in engineering, became successively a railroad engineer, a brigadier general in the Mexican War, first United States postmaster and first alcalde in California, Judge of the First Instance, mayor of San Francisco, territorial governor of "bleeding Kansas" (1856-57), a Union general in the Civil War, and finally governor of his own state of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Tinkcom, who has made good use of available manuscripts and printed contemporary materials, has based his work in part on Geary's own diary and letters. For the Mexican War episode the latter appear most illuminating because they throw additional, if not new, light on General Scott's conquest of Mexico City. Long well-chosen excerpts from the diary tell in matter-of-fact but vivid language about quarantine encampments, the bombardment and occupation of Vera Cruz, and the bitterly contested uphill march which ended with the fall of Chapultepec and Mexico City itself.

The author's treatment of Geary's California interlude (1849-50) is the weakest. There is no evidence that Mr. Tinkcom examined extensively the vast collection of San Francisco newspapers, California archival materials, and contemporary memoirs. He refers to such thin and popular accounts as Stewart Edward White's Forty-Niners and Hunt and Sanchez' A Short History of California. He leaves the reader with the impression that Geary as first postmaster and subsequently as city magistrate brought system and order to what had been the wild, lawless boom town of San Francisco. "The Postmaster's tireless efforts," he says, "soon brought order out of chaos, and the little [post] office began to function smoothly." Throughout the fifties, however, the postal service in California bore the brunt of sustained and bitter attack from the press and the general public; one editor wrote, "We might almost as well be without mails and post offices, as for any good they do us." It was the express companies and not the postal department that brought "order out of chaos."

The book is solidly written, the style clear and terse, and the bibliography reasonably extensive. It is a creditable piece of work, and its publication as one in the Pennsylvania Lives series is a matter for special commendation.


Among the interesting landmarks of Pennsylvania are the cloister homes at Ephrata, widely known by the public but rarely understood in their
historic significance. Who started this peculiar experiment in Protestant monasticism? What personal characteristics did the originator have, and why did he appeal to the community which gathered around him? Such questions are asked by many, and the answers are to be found in Mr. Klein's biographical study of the founder, Johann Conrad Beissel.

The author draws on his amazing knowledge of life in the German Palatinate at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was in this borderland area and in the drugged aftermath of the Thirty Years War that Beissel was born and grew to manhood. From this same section came most of the German immigrants whom Penn welcomed into his new domain. In order to help his readers understand Beissel the author sketches frontier conditions in colonial Pennsylvania, showing that the varied groups of Germans who settled there were transplanted from similar groups in Germany. In tolerant Pennsylvania they flourished and developed new forms and movements of their own. Mr. Klein clearly tells how the eager and introspective Beissel reacted to frontier conditions and how he developed his own religious beliefs from those of the Quakers, Mennonites, Inspirationists, and Dunkers. He explains the process whereby an individualistic recluse became the founder of a monastic community—a community at first centered in Beissel's mystic personality but later organized for economic survival by efficient and practical Prior Onesimus. Since this experiment apparently foreshadowed other idealistic communities of the next century in America, the author's analysis of the problems of community leadership is an especially valuable part of his study.

The book is the result of thorough scholarship and clears up a hitherto obscure phase of Pennsylvania history. Its historical interest would be increased by the inclusion of illustrations and possibly a condensed chronology of Beissel's career, and additional details of the membership, the development, and the decline of the Ephrata community might well be added. But the volume is what it claims to be: a biography of Johann Conrad Beissel. It is a well-written, revealing work, disclosing the importance of a formerly little-known man and a community which lasted for generations after the death of its founder.

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