NOTES AND QUERIES

Book Notices


As a by-product of his long-continued researches in Penn documentary history, of which he is the leading authority, and of his ten years of service on The Valley Forge Park Commission, Albert Cook Myers has issued a valuable and attractive volume entitled as above.

It is a beautiful little book in buff-colored covers, a buff that might have been copied from General Washington's own waistcoat. The frontispiece is "The Indian Dance", by John McNevin, from the engraving by John Rogers. Washington's first portrait, by Charles Willson Peale, showing our national hero as a Virginia Colonel, in 1772; Peale's Washington of 1779; a reproduction of the original Alexandria-Washington Lodge painting of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, and a copy of Arnold Anderson's etching of Mount Vernon grace the pages. The Fairfax portrait, well worked out in half-tone, has particular charm, and will be new to many of us. Even more informative are several full-page facsimiles of passages from Washington's Journal, kept by him in his hand in 1748 and now first photographically reproduced. These are piquantly interesting, and so is the Washington text. Pictures of the Thomas Cresap marker-tablet on the Susquehanna River, in York County, Pennsylvania, also appear.

This marker and numerous others placed by Dr. Myers remind us that, in recent years, many historic Indian sites have been studied out and fixed upon under the authority of the Pennsylvania State Historical Commission. In looking minutely into every phase of William Penn's career, Dr. Myers long since found occasion to specialize concerning the life, habits, haunts, and lore of the Indians with which the Proprietor and his successors treated for the lands within the bounds of the Commonwealth. In the pursuit of data necessary for the illumination of the Penn records covered in his more comprehensive, not to say monumental, work, Dr. Myers has hit upon a multitude of facts worth preserving as side-lights of his main theme.

Hence we now have his scholarly and charming Iroquois monograph based upon the Journal kept by Washington when, as a hardy stalwart of sixteen, he adventured over "Hills and Mountains," and saw strange sights in the border wilderness. In view of the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth, it is especially appropriate that this Journal should have been brought before the public in its present setting.

We have here not only the young Virginia surveyor practicing a hardihood that was to stand him in good stead under the strain of Revolutionary leadership, but, in reading the quaint narrative we find ourselves in the thick of frontier difficulties and dangers. All is actual, all is vivid. We hear the beat of the kettle-drum, see the seated warriors, row by row, behold the war-dance, just as it was given prior to the
Notes and Queries

French and Indian outbreak in which Washington was to participate. Here we have the backwoodsmen of the time. Conrad Weiser is with us in the flesh; and especially do we have as large as life, none other than the “Big Spoon,” Thomas Cresap himself—“Indian trader, trail blazer, road maker, farmer and cattlemong.” In fine, the book is as full of real border characters and atmosphere as it is free from unreal specimens so often presented in wilderness stories, as well as in loosely edited and unannotated chronicles.

It is interesting to note the fact, in a supplementary way, that Dr. Myers has affectionately dedicated the volume to John Toner and Sarah A. (Cook) Myers, his father and mother, “wedded for 58 years, now well and active in their eighties”, to whom, thirty years ago, he inscribed his first book.

GEORGE MORGAN.


A work that is at once fine poetry, a fascinating story, and a storehouse of American folk history, is a rarity. This combination has been most successfully achieved by Dr. Frederic Brush in his recently published narrative poem “The Long Hills.”

The story is laid in the period immediately following the Civil War, and the background of the Alleghany woods and rivers forms the setting against which the typical community life of the people is portrayed. The characters represent the finest type of American mountain people who retained the sturdy characteristics of their pioneer forebears, clear-thinking, virile, and endowed with a natural rustic humor. The everyday activities of these people is described in the splendid ballads with which the narrative is interspersed. The ballads of “The Auction”, “The Rastle”, “The Hickory Dance”, “The Trapper’s Song” and “Play-Party”, are especially notable for their racy style and underlying philosophy. The titles of these ballads indicate the aspects of community life with which they deal, and in which the fascinating folklore of these mountain people is recorded.

The author, Dr. Frederic Brush, is Medical Director of The Burke Foundation in White Plains, New York. His versatility as physician, teacher, naval officer during the war, hunter, athlete, is reflected in the keen human understanding he brings to the enrichment of his book. He is a strong supporter of the preservation of both the folk history of the Alleghany people among whom he lives, and the natural resources of the countryside. He writes with a strong, humorous and original style, and has produced a book of permanent value to all who are interested in Pennsylvania history.

J. G.


Another publication from the industrious pen of Mr. Stewart is a pamphlet about Sharptown, Salem County, New Jersey, where he spent his boyhood days. In 1711, Sharptown was known as Blessingtowne. It had a postmaster as early as 1812; a library and Masonic Lodge in 1814; and a schoolhouse before these dates, the only one on the ancient King’s Highway between Swedesboro and Salem. Considerable space is devoted to the Methodist Church, established in 1795, and to its tombstone inscriptions. The Sharptown mill pond, now dry, was once famous because it was filled with the gorgeous American lotus which grows in but few places in America.

F.

This book shows all of the Indian land deeds south of Trenton; the language of the Lenni-Lenape Indians taken from a manuscript deed book of 1684; the characteristics, life and habits of the Indians; Indian trails, beacon sites and tribal territories of the numerous tribes. It is well illustrated by plates showing a dugout canoe, Indian relics and facsimiles of Indian marks or signatures on their deeds to the early settlers of Southern New Jersey. In the compilation of this work Frank H. Stewart had the assistance of Charles A. Philhower and Miss Dorothy E. Middleton, both of whom have large collections of prehistoric Indian implements and weapons.


This book by Frank H. Stewart, President of the Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, New Jersey, seems destined to be one of the lasting contributions to the history of New Jersey during the Revolution. Its main features are the Anthony Wayne expedition to Salem County to obtain cattle for the relief of Washington's army at Valley Forge; the action at Quinton's Bridge and the massacre at Hancock's Bridge. The lists of Committee Men, Associators, Minute Men, Militia Men and Continental Soldiers of the county, hitherto unpublished, are of considerable genealogical interest. The little known fact of how the militia of the lower counties of New Jersey lured Count Donop's corps from its camp near Trenton a few days before Washington captured the Hessians is ably described. The book is well illustrated by maps of the Mawhood-Simcoe expedition, the Hancock house and other historic buildings.
CHARLES DURANG

Who with his brother Ferdinand first sang "The Star Spangled Banner" in public