BOOK REVIEWS


This reviewer was, a while back, in a professor’s office when a “student” entered and, fumbling his fraternity pin in lieu of magic lamp, stated he wished to drop the course entitled History of the West. It should have been about gold miners, Indian fights, and cowboys; but instead it seemed mostly concerned with land laws, emigration, agrarian and economic stuffs. Professor Clark’s noteworthy textbook would be a further disappointment to that lad; for its proportions assign more space to the older Wests than do other books of this kind. Part I (163 pages), “The West under Spain, France, and England,” begins with an outline of some of the geographical factors which conditioned the westward movement, and a brief sketch of the Indians as the white men found them; then follows a running account of Spanish and French explorations, missionary activities, and territorial claims, leading into descriptions of the struggle between France and England for Western empire and to the advance of the frontier during the period of English rule. Part II (234 pages), “The Frontier of the Middle West,” begins with the push of flatboats down the Ohio and closes with the admission of Minnesota to statehood. Part III (223 pages), “The Frontier of the Far West,” returns to 1803, the Louisiana Purchase, to begin its summary of the occupation of the farther regions.

Western Pennsylvania’s role in the expansion of the nation is inevitably prominent. “It was in the region south of New York—in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas—that the colonial frontier exhibited the most virile and aggressive expansion. It was here that there appeared the characteristics that were most typical of the American frontier.” Due emphasis is given the German and Scotch-Irish immigrants who poured into Pennsylvania and constituted the cutting edge of the frontier; the traders who, crossing the mountains to traffic with the Indians on the upper Ohio, were couriers of international conflict; and the land-hungry pioneers who rushed into this region after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. “The great Ohio River, springing from the union of two navigable streams, flowed westward with gentle current and beckoned in-
vitingly to all who came to its headwaters”; but it is interesting to meet the statement of Morris Birkbeck—a traveler in 1817, when the great migration by river and road into the Middle West was in full swing—that in the emigrant parties “the Pennsylvanians creep lingeringly behind, as though regretting the home they have left.”

The Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad is miscalled a “tramway” (p. 282). The sale of the main line of the Pennsylvania Public Works is misdated (p. 301). Whatever other errors occur in the treatment of Pennsylvania materials seem to be errors of omission. One of the author’s conclusions is that “What we need now is a careful study of the influences, originating in the frontier era, which still color our life to-day, and an evaluation of their serviceableness in a changed world.”

_University of Pittsburgh_  
E. Douglas Branch

_Through One Hundred and Fifty Years. The University of Pittsburgh._  
By Agnes Lynch Starrett. (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1937. xvi, 581 p. Illustrations.)

The story of the University of Pittsburgh Through One Hundred and Fifty Years, as told by Mrs. Starrett, is “interwoven with the pattern which is the history of Pittsburgh.” The university is, in fact, marked by characteristics as distinctly Pittsburgh as are her furnaces and the clouds of smoke, which at times envelop her and leave traces in every nook and corner. As the city grew, so did the university. From beginnings much like those of other American universities, the University of Pittsburgh broadened its scientific courses and enlarged and shifted the site of its plant, “with the development of coal and glass and steel and aluminum and electricity, around a solid core of the best that men have thought and felt, cherished in their literature and in their art.”

To those who have heard only of “smoke and sin-cursed Pittsburgh” Mrs. Starrett’s volume reveals a better side of a great American city strategically located alike for the activities of men of affairs and men of culture. The danger was that in the towering accomplishments of her Carnegies and her Mellons, Pittsburgh’s Brackenridges, her Robert Bruce, her John Black and her Father Maguire were being neglected. The saving factor in this situation was the cultural traditions and tastes of her men of affairs. With a rich background, the work of pioneer educators, her successful business men have built and adorned great cultural institutions.