BOOK REVIEWS


The folklore of Pennsylvania runs rich, broad and deep, and is perhaps more varied than that of any other state in the Union. It includes the lore of the mountaineer, the plainsman and the dwellers along the rivers. There are the songs and legends which came to America from the British Isles, those developed on the frontier, and those which have grown up with the rise of the cities. The Cornplanter Indians, the Pennsylvania Dutch, the Hungarians, the Slavs, the Italians, the Welsh, the Quakers all have their own traditions; and so do and did the many industrial groups of present and past, the wagoners, lumberjacks, miners, canal workers, oilmen, steelworkers and railroaders.

It was less than 12 years ago that a little more than a dozen students and lovers of Pennsylvania lore, directed by one of the principal folklorists of America, produced Pennsylvania Songs and Legends. And for almost half that time it has been impossible to get a copy for love or money.

Small wonder. It was produced by men who knew and loved their field, directed by George Korson, whose work on the folklore of the coal mines has brought lasting fame and international respect.

For Pittsburgers the high spot of the book will always be the last chapter, "Folk Songs of an Industrial City," by Jacob A. Evanson. For many years head of vocal music in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, Mr. Evanson has made a contribution to the city's life and culture that few can match.

No two of the chapters are alike, yet they blend into a unified volume, and are a treasury of the lore and the living of Pennsylvania and its people.

The reissue of this book by the Johns Hopkins Press is a fine service, not to Pennsylvanians alone, but to the entire nation. It places this valuable work once more on the market, and hence not only within reach of the thousands who have sought it in vain, but before the eyes of other thousands who never knew that such treasures existed in the Keystone State.

Its issue at this time, in a companion volume with George Korson's latest work, Black Rock, points up his great contribution to the folklore of the Keystone State. Although living now in
Washington, D. C., he was until last summer president of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, and undoubtedly kept it alive by his efforts after Colonel Henry W. Shoemaker had to give up the work.

The new rush of interest it will bring should impress historians, folklorists and patrons of the arts with one more thing: the urgency of our situation.

A glance at the list of authors will reveal that three of the 14 who took part have died since the first publication. These include Colonel Shoemaker, student of central and mountain lore; J. Herbert Walker, who wrote on the lore of lumberjacks and raftsmen; and William S. Troxell, the beloved “Pumpernickle Bill” who knew the Pennsylvania Dutch as few have known them. And almost half the rest are so old that it would be impossible for them to make such a contribution to the subject today.

Eleven years may seem so little a time to wait. But great works on other phases of Pennsylvania life and lore may be lost if we delay their writing and publication.

*Pittsburgh Press*

George Swetnam


The history of this nation’s settlement and the expansion of its frontiers is inseparable from the rifle. This is especially true of the surge of settlers who moved into Ohio and Kentucky in the early part of the 19th century. With these pioneers went one of the necessary tools of colonization of those days, a muzzle-loaded flintlock rifle. Evolved from German arms, which were brought to these shores by early settlers, and which for a time were copied by native gunsmiths, this New World weapon met the needs of the environment in which the American settler found himself. While this rifle found extensive use in many places other than Kentucky, it was here that its reputation was made. Researchers prior to Mr. Kauffman have used the familiar term, “Kentucky Rifle,” and made little effort to establish its true lineage. It is the theme of this book that this weapon at least deserves a hyphenated name since it was born a Pennsylvania rifle and was later married to Kentucky. Exhaustive research has been done in this book to prove that this product of