Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1753-1758 is almost equally divided into two distinct parts. The first pertains to Western Pennsylvania and the second deals with the forts that were established in Central and Eastern Pennsylvania after actions in the Upper Ohio Valley put the Indians on the offense. The relationship these small outposts had to the over-all picture of frontier defense is considered in great detail by the author.

Mr. Hunter includes in his book a more than adequate index, copious reference notes and a detailed bibliography all of which are highly desirable.

The present book differs from the older Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania in that it utilizes recent publications and documents not available in 1896. In addition, it is written on an historical basis. It is sincerely hoped that the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission sees fit to issue a second volume as it purports to do, dealing with the forts after 1758.

An unusual feature of the book is the inclusion of a full page of abbreviations in the front following the table of contents and list of illustrations. The plan usually followed is to have all extraneous material at the rear of the book. It would be desirable to have some of the fourteen contemporary maps and plans enlarged so as to be more easily read.

These minor items, however, do not detract from masterful editing and tying together of the economic, military, Indian and governmental factors which affected the forts on the frontier.

Pittsburgh

Frank W. Heckler, Jr.


The Liberal Arts in the American Common Schools

This book of books is a product of careful, painstaking primary scholarship, sensitively competent editorial work, and handsomely effective book-making. It is profusely illustrated with excellent facsimile reproductions of pages from old school books.

Nietz, without apology, challenges trends of the past four decades in writing history of education. This is a study of the history of pedagogy in which relatively little attention is given to broad social,
economic, political, and intellectual trends in the out-of-school culture. Its method is primarily inductive and realistic. The author spent a lifetime collecting the data (the Nietz Collection of Old School Textbooks of the University of Pittsburgh Library) and directing the research of graduate students devoted to analysis of that which had been collected. The author admits that the collection is a sampling, and might not object to the suggestion that external tests of the validity of the sample have not been made. He would insist, however, that the search was lengthy and exhaustive. (Nietz spent 35 years at it, and rummaged in ancient book shops from New Orleans to Boston, New York to St. Louis.) He presents this publication as a report, thus extending an open invitation to critical examination and test of the findings by all comers.

Working, thus, inductively, Nietz presents physical descriptions of the books—size, binding, paper, type-face—and then proceeds to analyze and describe the contents. Chapters are devoted to spellers, readers, grammars, then to arithmetics, geographies, American histories, civil government texts, and physiologies, in the order named. A final chapter on penmanship, art, and music concludes the book. These principles of division are derived from the published titles of the textbooks. The order in which the chapters are arranged is apparently determined by chronology, although this is not made explicit by the author. Dilworth's speller was published in England in 1740 and was reprinted by numerous printers in America, gaining wide circulation here; moreover, the earliest spellers were omnibus textbooks serving also as readers. The teaching of grammar began after 1750. The earliest arithmetic texts to be widely circulated here were Dilworth's, written in England, to which Nietz attributes a publication date of 1773, and Nicholas Pike's (1788). The earliest geographies identified by Nietz as widely circulated came after the Revolution, while "... only eight or nine American history textbooks were published in our country before 1820, and apparently none had a wide circulation ..." [p. 234]. Nietz presents evidence to refute the assertions of Earle Rugg, Charles H. Judd, Henry Bourne and others that civil government did not enter the curriculum of our schools until the middle of the nineteenth century. His findings are that textbooks in civil government were widely circulated between 1835 and 1854. Physiology textbooks for use in the common schools came mainly after 1850. Apparently penmanship was taught incidentally along with spelling until the coming of the
Spencerian copy books in 1873 (although Nietz has located several earlier copy books). It took legislative enactment to permit Boston to list drawing as an optional school subject in 1860, but music came to be taught earlier in the large city school systems.

If Nietz' sampling be credited, and if his method of determining circulation and use of books (tabulation of frequencies in the collection, according to dates of publication, supplemented by claims of circulation carried in the front matter of some of the books) be accepted, his research tells the story of the development of the American school curriculum to 1900. This way the trivium was, indeed, the core, elements of the quadrivium gradually coming in as an institutional structure of American public education emerged during the nineteenth century. There are those who argue that more recent changes in the schools have de-emphasized the arts of language. Perhaps the "New Education" of the twentieth century should be viewed, rather, as a movement in which words, propositions, and books are seen as instruments not as ends. From this perspective, books appear as ingenious artifacts invented by men to make thought more precise and effective. One aspect of education involves the nature of the artifacts as such. What is more important, however, is how the ideas and skills represented in the books affect the lives of human beings.

Students of the history of Western Pennsylvania and the Ohio River Valley will be interested in evidence that Pittsburgh and Cincinnati were early centers of textbook publishing and distribution, and that McGuffey and Ray, two of the most prolific producers of readers and arithmetics, were born within ten miles of each other between Washington (Pennsylvania) and Wheeling. They will also be grateful to Professor Nietz and the University of Pittsburgh for having arranged to house the textbook collection—a valuable contribution to Americana—in special quarters in the new University of Pittsburgh Library.

University of Pittsburgh  

Robert E. Mason