BOOK REVIEWS


The Foreword to Paul Wallace's Indians in Pennsylvania says, "There has been a real need for a simply written history which covers the whole story of the Indians in Pennsylvania and takes into account the findings of modern scholars." One can say Wallace's book fills the need and in the saying one has written a review.

This is an unpretentious work whose simplicity and ease of presentation masks its wealth of information. The Indians of Pennsylvania are discussed in terms of time from the first entry into the Commonwealth, perhaps as much as eleven thousand years ago, to today and the Kinzua Dam situation. Theories of their origin, their tribal units and confederacies, their living patterns, and their political history, particularly as it relates to their contacts with the whites, all these are described clearly and concisely. Thirty-six biographies of Indians important in the history of the Commonwealth illustrate typical careers of effective Indian leaders.

Particularly valuable to the non-specialist is a summary of living patterns of Pennsylvania's Indians as exemplified by those of the Delaware people. Wallace tells us what these people looked like; what sort of clothing they wore; what they ate—how they grew it or hunted it or gathered it, cooked it, served it—; what their homes were like; how husbands treated wives, wives husbands, and both children; what their kinship system was and its profound effect on their social and governmental organizations; how they traveled; how they fought; how they saw themselves in relation to the natural and supernatural worlds.

The author's treatment of the disruption of Indian life after the entry of Europeans into the Northeast is sympathetic but not sentimental. The conclusion is inescapable that two divergent modes of life met and that the one capable of most effective organization and central direction of political and economic affairs was bound to triumph. It is equally inescapable that the dispossessed society had its own dignity and worth and was ineffectual only in terms of European modes.

This book is to be highly recommended for those seeking an
introduction to the Indian story in Pennsylvania. I know no other as useful.

James L. Swauger
Assistant Director of Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh

History of the Pittsburgh Mercy Hospital 1847-1959. Compiled by Sister M. Cornelius Meerwald. (Privately reproduced by the Sisters of Mercy; edition limited to fifty copies—346 pages exclusive of indices and appendix.)

This book is an extraordinary document, destined to be a source book for many papers yet to be written. It presents in minute detail the story of a great hospital and covers more than a hundred years of its history. Since the hospital was founded and developed by a religious order, its records have been kept with scrupulous care much as the records of a posterity conscious family. There is continuity. The author, a member of this Community, obviously has had access to documents that probably would not be available to any outsider. She quotes freely not only from the hospital day books and reports, the administrators' records, the minutes of meetings, and the housekeepers' accounts; but also from the private diaries and letters written by members of her Community and preserved in the archives of the Motherhouse. The ordinary materials of research: the medical journals, the newspapers, magazine articles, she has obviously consulted with meticulous care. Her own long association with the hospital has made her the ideal person to record this history.

While the title page says "compiled" by Sister Cornelius Meerwald, the author does far more than compile the material. The mark of her personality is on every page. It is immediately evident that she is a trained medical observer, conversant with medical and surgical terminology. Brightening the almost overwhelming accumulation of facts, both historical and medical, are flashes of penetrating humor and shrewd appraisal of the people of whom she writes. She has enriched her work with anecdote after anecdote. Finally, demonstrating the continuity of the story, she shares with her readers the reminiscences of the very old Sisters told to the young Sisters at recreation. For example she remembers as a novice hearing Sister Madelene O'Donnell, then a jubilarian, recount her experiences as a nurse in the Civil War, invariably beginning, "I was in the army when I was nineteen."