BOOK REVIEWS

Research Opportunities in American Cultural History. Edited by John Francis McDermott. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961.)

Professor McDermott has edited a volume of fine essays on studies in American culture that will be useful as a quick guide for the scholar already at work as well as for the graduate student who is considering his future specialty. In a few terse and neatly phrased paragraphs, twelve scholars in as many essays review the potentialities and needs for study in the fields of colonial history, the French in the Mississippi Valley, Indian relations, travel literature, the immigrant, the scientist, folklore, regional literature, publishing, popular education, the visual arts and recreation. In each case the author briefly reviews the work already accomplished in his field, suggests specific areas that need further activity, and often goes on to propose courses of action that the student may follow.

One of the most interesting selections is the discussion of folklore by Professor Dorson. Tracing the "surge and ebb" of American folklore studies, he emphasizes the "haphazard and rather unprofessional character" (106) of them and notes that the "wayward, individual collector" (107) is the chief student. His appeal for qualified persons is bolstered by his proposal of primary avenues of approach, the most ingenious of which is his suggestion of "... following the guidelines already available in the relic areas of folk speech mapped by fieldworkers on the Linguistic Atlas of America" (116).

Professors Ewan and Kaser explore areas outside the purview of many scholars, the former writing about the scientist on the frontier and the latter about the booktrade. A list of unstudied scientists by country of origin is provided by Professor Ewan, who reminds the reader of the predominance (often neglected) of such men in our intellectual history (82). A call is sounded by Professor Kaser for objective studies of American publishing houses (too frequently they are compiled by those with financial interests in the firms), comparative studies of contributions of several publishers to one aspect of the booktrade, and special studies of printing.

Professor Peckham's rather philosophic article on Indian studies is commendable. In order to convince the scholar that he must not "sentimentalize over the fate of the Indian" (32), he presents a
bird's-eye history of Indian relations in the United States. His plea, too, is for fewer amateurs and enthusiasts, who produce a folklore-centered Indian history.

Professor McDermott's own essay on the French in the Mississippi Valley is as incisive and packed as is his book. He covers quantities of material rapidly by constantly contrasting accomplishments with possibilities. Plunging directly into his theme, he sets forth a veritable list of papers, libraries — places where material beckons. His insight into pristine subjects — such as the study of book ownership as a clue to cultural knowledge in various areas — is perceptive indeed.

And perceptive without exception are all the essays gathered here. Any one who wants a quick run-down on American studies and everyone who wants to assist in continuing them will find this volume a necessity and a pleasure to peruse.

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The republication of the eighteenth century road maps of Christopher Colles will prove useful to historians of post-Revolutionary travel along the eastern seaboard. The maps have been well reprinted by the use of modern photographic reproduction methods. In fact, the reproductions are clearer than the originals we have examined in the New York Public Library and the William L. Clements Library. The entire number of eighty-six plates on strip maps are tied in with a key map and a classified index at the end of the book.

The editor has devoted two chapters to the discussion of the probable source materials used by Colles and a comparison of his maps with those drawn by Robert Erskine and Simeon DeWitt, Geographers and Surveyors-General to the Continental Army during the Revolution. He feels that because many of the same locations are spotted on both series of maps, Colles must have been guilty of plagiarism. Indeed, it would be strange if two maps of the same