
This is a volume of Regions of America, a "series of books that depict our natural regions, their history, development and character." It is likely that the perspective, organization and content of this book were partly determined by the purpose and plan of the series.

In informal conversation a friend and admirer of Wallace described the work as a collection of brilliant essays. That it certainly is, but it is much more. In an excellent newspaper book review (Pittsburgh Press, December 1, 1962), George Swetnam, himself a scholarly historian and lucid writer, entitles his review "History of State Well Told" and declares the book "Ranks with the Best." Swetnam's estimate of the author and the book is unexceptionable. A particularly significant remark is that it is not "waterlogged with battles, politics and governors." Unintentionally, in typographical error, he credits the volume with 532 pages, and thereby accidentally hits upon a shortcoming of the volume, for it should have had two hundred additional pages.

Too small and too short, Pennsylvania, Seed of a Nation is the most readable and inspiring single volume on the general history of the state. In thirty-three numbered sections (really brief chapters with graphic but wholly unobjectionable titles) Dr. Wallace handles many if not most of the significant items and aspects of Pennsylvania history. Within the formulated purpose of the series, he has utilized books old and new, magazine articles and manuscript material. The result is a remarkable combination of scholarship and artistry.

The merits of this publication justify somewhat lengthy attention to its contents. Geology and geography are well presented in the first seven pages. Pages 8-32, four sections, mainly on Indians, show good workmanship on the part of a recognized authority. Conjectural chronology and mention of "diseased white riffraff . . . on the frontier" are minor shortcomings.

Sections five and six on William Penn and his Holy Experiment though greatly condensed are well organized and well written. Section seven, "Peace without Pacifism," combines the general and the particular in matters of Indian policy, colonial relations and international affairs. Section eight, "The Melting Pot," deals with ethnic factors and social organization. Section nine (an omnibus) treats growth,
Franklin, religions, education and Indian relations, with three charts in strangely reversed chronological order. In section ten, George Washington in late 1753 and early 1754 is allotted only five pages, but the narrative and interpretation are admirable. Section eleven, "The Fight for the Forts," covers the French and Indian War and with the natural emphasis upon western Pennsylvania furnishes a neat transition to section twelve on "Western Pennsylvania." A paragraph (p. 87) on Washington in 1754 is weak and chronologically misleading. The harsh criticism of Colonel Gage (p. 89) seems unduly partial in both meanings of the word, and the summary (p. 92) of the section can be called inadequate. Section twelve deals with frontier advance, Amherst's policies, Pontiac's War and Bouquet's expedition of 1764. Here as elsewhere appears much good literary statement with occasional brilliant similes and metaphors, but the superiority of the judgment of mercenary Indian agents is questionable. John McMillan's name is incorrectly written and the Chauncey Brockway narrative is lengthy incidentalism. In section thirteen the "split between patriot and loyalist" is language involving relatively indefinable words. As written the antithesis begs the question at issue. A thoughtful analysis of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 is interjected and a summary treatment of the American Revolutionary War presents notable Pennsylvanians such as John Dickinson, Anthony Wayne and Peter Muhlenberg. Section twenty, with the excellent caption "Breaking the Mountain Barrier," covers turnpikes, canals and railways. Section twenty-one, "A Game without Rules," discusses politics with mention of sectionalism, the Scotch-Irish, Anti-Masonry, education and the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1838. Eight gubernatorial régimes 1790-1838 are consolidated in one paragraph of twelve lines.

Section twenty-two, "The Underground Railroad," is dramatic rather than expository. The slave trade background is omitted and a good map would have added much. The story of the Civil War is condensed in twelve pages in section twenty-three (pp. 187-198) under the somewhat narrow caption "Abraham Lincoln in Pennsylvania." Included are several questionable assumptions, respectively about compromise (p. 190), about Lee in 1863, and about the second commandment (p. 198), the last of which would seem to condemn warfare as well as slavery.

Pennsylvania since 1865 gets ten sections or about a third of the volume. Six of the sections are topical, dealing with industry, coal, lumber, petroleum, labor and arts. Sections 31-33 are regional rather
than state-wide. Only section twenty-nine, "Return to Democracy," is highly inclusive.

As stated above, this volume needed additional pages, including another hundred to balance the periods before and after 1865. Thus enlarged, the work would monopolize the textbook market for collegiate courses in the subject. As published it will sell thousands of copies to individual readers.

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