

The Library of Bucknell University. By J. ORIN OLIPHANT. (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1962. 154 pp.)

To whom has been vouchsafed the great good fortune to have inhabited the tradition-fraught halls and to have trod the leafy walks of the oak-shaded campus of Bucknell University, this delightful little book has an appeal *per se*.

To the more general reader, devoid of the nostalgic memories, there is ample interest to render the time expended in its perusal rewarding. Here we have a stint of scholarly research performed by Dr. J. Orin Oliphant, delving into the archives of the University at Lewisburg (the early name of Bucknell), the records of various literary societies, the minutes of the Board of Trustees, and campus publications. And who is more logically qualified to have executed the work? The author is the University archivist as well as professor of history.

The result is a monograph that is a paragon of searching investigation, organization, and documentation, with meaty footnotes that are explanatory of sources and filled with interesting sidelights. In all, it presents a *beau ideal* of organization of historical material and methods in composition of a sophisticated thesis or doctoral dissertation. Indeed, this subject would have offered a fertile field for such a dissertation.

In depicting the progress of Bucknell's library from origin to the status of one of the nation's best equipped university libraries (200,000 volumes), it is also a chronology of the development of many contemporary college libraries and, in turn, analogous to that of institutions they serve.

During the years, 1905-1951, a fine Carnegie Library building was the center of activity in "the Quadrangle." Since 1951, the Ellen Clarke Bertrand Library has reared its stately tower, in the best approved Christopher Wren style, over the group of ivy covered Georgian buildings. That year, the writer had the good fortune to view and tour the new Lamont Library at Harvard. After the completion of the Bertrand Library, the similarity of design and facilities in both buildings appeared very striking. The coincidence has been explained in this little book. Jens Frederick Larson, the eminent architect, planned both buildings.

The principal reason for the presence of Dr. Oliphant's little book on the shelves of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

is not purely historical. It is an object lesson, to whomever it concerns, in good historical writing. After a comparison with expository and commemorative works on many public and university libraries, it becomes apparent that an amazing amount of information is packed into these 154 very readable pages. In view of its limited field of readership, this book exemplifies the old adage that "A thing worth the doing is worth doing well."

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

EDWARD G. WILLIAMS

An Investigation of America's First Oil Well. Who Drilled It? By ERNEST C. MILLER. (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1964. 66 pp. \$3.00.)

This may be a prejudiced review, but the reviewer believes it to be accurate. He knows the author, is familiar with his methods, is aware of his thirst for accuracy, and knows that his sources of information are far-flung. In short, the reviewer thinks that he himself is in the position of the home plate umpire: right on top of the pitch.

The pitch is right across the plate. Mr. Miller set out to resolve the claims of the United States and Canada as to who drilled the first well for oil on this continent. He finds in the U. S. a completely documented case — the letters, ledgers and other papers dating from the emergence of the original idea until after the Drake Well came in successfully. Based on this evidence, any lawyer would go to bed secure in the certainty that he had Drake's case won.

But in Canada it is different. Vagueness is the most apt word. The written evidence consists of newspaper articles and other sources with non-existent or indifferent dating.

Mr. Miller digs. He examines carefully everything he uncovers. He is, above all, "Kind to the Kanadians" (reviewer's phrase). His is not a jingoistic report. It is as impartial as rain, which knows no geographic lines. And, in addition, it is absorbing reading — which, alas, is not common in the field of history.

Titusville, Pennsylvania

JAMES B. STEVENSON