

BOOK REVIEWS

The Horn Papers—Early Westward Movement in the Monongahela and Upper Ohio, 1765-1795. By W. F. HORN. In three volumes. (Vols. 1 and 2, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa.; Vol. 3, Hagstrom Company, New York, N. Y., 1945. Maps, illustrations.)

THIS work was conceived and published by W. F. Horn, A. L. Moredock, and J. L. Fulton, a committee of the Greene County Historical Society. In reality it is two separate publications. Volumes one and two, octavo-size, are paged consecutively and have one index; while volume three is a folio atlas of township and county maps of Fayette, Greene, and Washington counties. The township maps are the product of the Pennsylvania State Department of Internal Affairs.

The first unit of the work contains the diaries of several ancestors of W. F. Horn, the principal contributor to the work; many historical essays covering the history of this country from the Spanish explorations to the present time; and last, but not least, several hundred biographical sketches of the early settlers of southwestern Pennsylvania. As for the qualifications of the authors to write such articles, little seems to be known except that they are native-born residents of Greene County and all are interested in its history.

From the introduction one learns that the diaries are printed from copies made in 1891 from supposedly original documents handed down from generation to generation in the Horn family. There is a court record printed from a supposedly original document, while the miscellaneous essays and biographical sketches are, for the most part, the writings of W. F. Horn. Since these volumes contain no footnotes, bibliographies and but few internal citations to accepted historical works and documents, it is extremely difficult even to attempt to evaluate them.

The first four chapters of volume one contain diaries and notes of three successional ancestors of W. F. Horn, namely Jacob, Christopher, his son, and John, his grandson. In addition there is a diary of John, the elder son of Jacob Horn and brother of Christopher. The time and place of the happenings reported are Snow Creek, Virginia, in 1735 to the settlements in Greene County, Pennsylvania, in 1818. Even the cursory survey made at this time

shows these documents are greatly at variance with documents of unquestionable provenance. For example, note the case of Christopher Gist. With the publication of the *Bouquet Papers* by the Pennsylvania Historical Commission a few years ago, came verification of the circumstantial evidence that this famous explorer for the Ohio Company died in 1759. Published letters in numbers 21644, parts one and two and 21645 of the *Bouquet Papers* prove that Gist died of smallpox in Winchester, Virginia, in 1759. The fact that he died before 1762 is recorded in the *Journal* of the House of Burgesses of Virginia. There, the proceedings for November 19 and December 6, 1762, record statements concerning "Christopher Gist, deceased." Jacob Horn's "Dairy, 1735-1777," as printed in the *Horn Papers*, carries Gist's activities into 1769, a full ten years after his death had been officially announced. Also the *Horn Papers* give a vivid account of his death at "Laurel Hill, or Little Haystack Knob . . . at half after 4 o'clock on the 4 day of October 1769." To quote again from this diary (p. 47), from the entry for October 27, 1777: "By his [Gist's] stated will of mind in 1759, he was buried 1000 feet above his magazine beneath the shade of the great oak tree, at the Foot of Dunbar's trail to the Slave Quarters, at the time of Sunset on October 6th, 1769." In the light of the military correspondence as published in the *Bouquet Papers*, this is, indeed, a very vivid description of a burial, but certainly not the burial of Christopher Gist.

The Horn diaries record that Gist's home on his plantation escaped destruction until 1823. According to Villiers, the French officer at Fort Necessity, he burned everything on his return from the battle. Late in 1754 Gist petitioned the Virginia House of Burgesses requesting payment or an allowance for the loss of his home and household effects by the French after the battle of Fort Necessity. (*Journal*, House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1754, pp. 223, 244-45, 247.)

There are 151 references to Christopher Gist in the index. Of these most refer to his activities during this questionable time, 1759-1769, the ten years after his death was reported to Colonel Bouquet. To reconcile these different versions of the life and activities of this man is a challenge to historians.

As in the case of Christopher Gist, the *Horn Papers* give John Canon a much longer life than do other history sources. According to an entry in the Jacob Horn diary for September 12, 1748, John Canon was a man of affairs and influence on the frontier. Little has been established on the early life of Canon, certainly not as much as one would like to know, when

one considers his importance in western Pennsylvania history. The Patterson family, descendants of Jean, John Canon's daughter, is responsible for writing into history John Canon's death in November, 1798, at the age of fifty-eight years. It is also believed that the John Canon papers were in Jean's possession. There are extant, however, two documents which throw some light on his life. According to John Canon's will (Washington County Will Book, vol. 1, p. 367) he had, in 1798, three children of an age that he provided them such "a decent education as the estate will bear." The will also names eight children who survived him, not five as stated in the *Horn Papers*. As for both John Canon and Christopher Gist being of Lord Dunmore lineage, *Burke's Peerage* fails to show any record of marriages of feminine Murrys to either a Canon or a Gist. The *Horn Papers* record Canon's wife's name as Sarah, while her own signature reveals her to have been "Jennet Canon." (Indenture to Jefferson College, 1796.)

Peter Chartier, another prominent character in the *Horn Papers*, received no higher rating than a traitor and robber by authorities in Pennsylvania. After 1745 he was branded an outlaw by the state. Historians have been unable to find even a faint hint that he returned to the western frontier. These *Papers* record that he lived in tranquility here in western Pennsylvania near Canonsburg where he was buried by John Canon, Jacob Horn, and other old-time friends.

The same puzzling questions confront one in regard to the Eckerlins. Dr. Samuel Eckerlin of Pennsylvania set out in company with his brothers from the Ephrata community in eastern Pennsylvania on September 4, 1745 (*Chronicon Ephratense*, p. 186). The *Horn Diaries* offer evidence that they were here as early as 1737. Unless there were two separate groups of Eckerlins who migrated to this region in the first half of the eighteenth century, this is "another nugget for historians to crack."

A last example of the puzzling information found in this work is the date of the death of John Fraser, given here as 1769 (p. 211). According to information contained in documents published in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, first series, volume four, pages 458-59, John Fraser was a justice of the peace living in Bedford on January 26, 1773. The items published in the *Archives* are a letter from John Fraser and George Woods written to Governor Penn from Bedford on January 26, 1773, and an examination of one James McCashlin, attested by justices of the peace John Fraser and John Woods. The letter and

deposition report highway robberies on the public road between Carlisle and Bedford.

The court record in the *Horn Papers*, as mentioned before, is printed from an original document. That document in itself would require an intimate study before one could evaluate it. Since this reviewer has not had access to the original for any period of time, there has been no opportunity to study the paper, ink, or handwriting as tests of its validity. In the case of original documents this external evidence is of the greatest consequence, and so that part of the work must be omitted from this review.

The biographical and historical essays have as their basis the Horn documents, and so it is impossible to discuss them separately. The biographies do contain a vast amount of information, but in the few cases cited they embody historical data greatly at variance with accepted historical evidence. Therefore one can only lament the fact that they are not annotated. Even the sparsest footnotes or other guides to the sources of information would have rendered the sketches more valuable.

The last chapter in volume two is a reprint of the first federal census of Washington County, taken in 1790. It is good to have this document reprinted.

As stated in the first paragraph, volume three, the atlas volume, is a separate publication and is especially valuable to genealogists. However, it is hoped that the full use of the maps will not be impaired by being hidden away in libraries under the title, *Horn Papers*. The historical map, a work of the committee, makes available a fine topographical map of this region. Unfortunately many of the interpolated features such as trails and landmarks are based solely on the Horn diaries.

This review is no more than an attempt to point out some puzzling information published in the *Horn Papers*. Since much of the data is at variance with well-established documented history, the reader familiar with western Pennsylvania history will be confused and startled with this incongruity, and historians will want to know more of the provenance of these published documents.

Pittsburgh

LAWRENCE A. ORRILL¹

¹ Unfortunately, Mr. Orrill will not be here to continue the discussion likely to be stimulated by this and other reviews of the *Horn Papers*. He died suddenly on July 25, and his review is here published as he had submitted it after consulting with other authorities on the subject.—Ed.