BOOK REVIEWS


The George Mercer Papers, edited by Lois Mulkearn of the University of Pittsburgh's Darlington Library, is a distinguished book, important both in itself and for the trend in scholarship of which it is evidence.

Here, made available for the first time to those unable to visit the Darlington Library, are the papers of the famous Ohio Company which played so considerable a part in the winning of the West. Conscientiously edited and published in attractive and convenient form, they provide both incentive and tools for productive scholarship. The papers themselves are accompanied by aids of a kind the student always hopes for but seldom finds with his source materials. There is an excellent "Foreword" by R. W. G. Vail, director of the New-York Historical Society, in which the Ohio Company is shown in perspective against the background of American history. In the editor's "Introduction" we are given a brief history of the company itself and of this collection of papers, a collection which comprises most of the official correspondence between the Ohio Company in Virginia and its representatives in London, gathered by George Mercer, who was the company's agent in London after 1763. Along with these documents there is reproduced a rare pamphlet, the Case of the Ohio Company, contributed by the New-York Historical Society. The "Commentary" and "Annotations" which follow are not only illuminating in connection with the text but also good reading in themselves.

One of the best things in the "Commentary" is a careful tracing of the events that led up to the Lancaster Indian Treaty of 1744 and of the consequences of that treaty in the white man's race into the Ohio Valley. The extended notes and commentaries, amounting to almost three hundred pages, give the book a distinctive quality. Some of them are more like historical essays than annotations, and may be read independently of the documents which they were written to explain.

It should be added that there is a classified bibliography, a set of exceptionally well-printed maps, and a good index. For those interested in the detail of the white man's expansion across the Alleghenies—the traders, explorers, Indians, settlers, and business men—this is an
indispensable source book and work of reference.

Like the volume of *The Papers of Henry Bouquet* published recently by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the *George Mercer Papers* takes rank in the forefront of those works in which a new intentness is devoted to the study of the Indians who have figured in our history. Too often in the past historians, even some of the best of them, have relaxed when Indians appeared and have dipped into popular secondary sources, as if it were necessary to draw a color line in research and deny to the redman the protection of scholarly criteria. No doubt childhood recollections of the *Leatherstocking Tales* have been in part responsible for this. The consequences has been a trail of "Vulgar Errors" passing for Indian history.

Mrs. Mulkearn has had the courage to break with that tradition. She has, for example, in annotating Christopher Gist's journals, not been content to depend exclusively even on the best printed comment (William Darlington's edition, 1893), but has gone out into the field to follow the course of Gist's journeys for herself, in the course of which expeditions she has located some of Gist's hitherto unidentified landmarks. More important, she has prepared for the notes extended biographical sketches of the Indians introduced in the *Papers*. It took courage to do that in the present state of historical scholarship. It is true that sufficient records have been preserved of our early Indians, thanks largely to the Moravian missionaries, who left voluminous diaries; but these are for the most part still in manuscript, not yet translated from the German in which they were written. Until this undigested mass of material has been worked over, prepared for use, and put into circulation, editors of texts dealing with our Indians are at a disadvantage.

Mrs. Mulkearn's Indian biographies are a refreshing and welcome attempt to bring some order into a chaotic situation. Taken as a whole, they are the best available set of biographies of western Pennsylvania Indians. At the same time they inevitably reflect something of the tardiness of scholarship in this field. Perhaps until the completion of the great work now in progress in the Archives of the Moravian Church at Bethlehem, where the vast wealth of documents in the "Indian Department" is being organized and catalogued, scholars will lack assurance in this area of research.

Familiarity with these Moravian diaries and the records contained in them would have saved the editor of the *George Mercer Papers* from such errors as bringing together details from the lives of three different
Indians by the name of "Joshua" to make the biography of one, or the confusing of the Conestoga Indians (who were massacred in 1763) with the Moravian Delawares and Mahicans who were confined that same year on Province Island for their protection.

Mention of such things is not intended to belittle what is undoubtedly a most valuable and encouraging work. It is intended, rather, to accentuate the achievement. The Buhl Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh Press are to be congratulated on this handsome and workmanlike volume, which has made substantial gains for scholarship over difficult terrain.

Annville, Pennsylvania

Paul A. W. Wallace


This is an admirable volume of average book size, which deserves a place in every private and public library in the state, where history may be of continuing or temporary interest.

It presents noteworthy facts associated with historic spots in twenty-seven counties of our state, which lie west of a line through the tip of Centre County. It does not pretend to give all the history but what it presents is authentic, at least to the extent that it was compiled from many standard works, available in the great Darlington Library of which Mrs. Mulkearn is the head, as well as personal visits to the sites it describes. It offers an extensive bibliography, with a librarian's discrimination as to the importance of source material. It has an index which will delight those to whom reference time is important and a reduced Rand McNally map of Western Pennsylvania is tucked in an unobtrusive envelope in the back. A small map introduces every county chapter and these maps have been reduced to elementary simplicity, showing streams, pertinent towns, and main roads which are designated by familiar state and national symbols. These maps are also spotted with numbers which have special significance as explained below.

If the reader knows the name of an event on which he desires more information, the usual index route will furnish page references. On the other hand, if he has only general information about a section and is curious about the possible historical interest of a particular spot, the little county map will likely show numbers on or near the locality. These indicate the paragraphs in the county chapters, where that data