

BOOK REVIEWS

Penn's Woods West by EDWIN L. PETERSON and THOMAS M. JARRETT, photographer. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958, 249 pp., over 300 photographs, 5 in color. \$15.00.

In the halcyon days—or so they seem in retrospect—just before World War I, the poet Vachel Lindsay wandered westward from his home village of Springfield, Illinois, to Colorado and New Mexico, quite penniless but amply supplied with printed handouts, his *Gospel of Beauty* and *Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread*. His self-imposed code was to have nothing to do with “cities, railroads, money, baggage, or fellow tramps.” (Automobiles were not then a temptation or a menace to hikers.) Lindsay’s gospel infringed upon no faiths; he merely asked that all persons add to their existing creeds the concept that love of beauty is holy because beauty of sky and landscape stem from God. Nor was he an isolationist; he taught that men should travel widely, then return to their homelands to introduce new ideas of beauty, for “the things most worthwhile are one’s own hearth and neighborhood.”

I was forcibly reminded of Lindsay’s *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* before I had read more than a dozen pages of *Penn's Woods West*. This also is more than a traveler’s diary; it is a love story. Two men, a sensitive writer and a perceptive photographer, engage in a year-long love affair with western Pennsylvania—its forests and parks, lakes and streams, skies and people. There is more than a touch of Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, De Voto, Krutch, and Schweitzer; and thus what might have been just another guidebook is elevated to a noble blend of outdoor experiences, sound conversation, and sentient ecology, without mawkish references to feathered friends, solemn pronouncements, or technical jargon.

Although virtually every important outdoor facility in western Pennsylvania was visited and appreciated, the finest portion of the book is the tryst with the Allegheny River. From the time Peterson and Jarrett, and the boys who started the trip with them, slid their canoes into the up-river shallows above Corydon, to the time they disembarked from Captain Fred Way’s *Lady Grace* at Sewickley, the story flows along. Peterson expresses his love for the River in matchless prose: “There is something hypnotic and magical about the Allegheny. As soon as you are on it and feel the current pulling, you are caught up in the spell. You forget other streams and other

loveliness. Every morning, when you start out on it, it is as fresh and new as dogwood blossoms in May or a gum tree in October. Every morning it has a different look on its face, yet it is always the same face. One morning it is dancing with high lights, another morning it is as sober as its shadows. One morning it is chaste and frivolous with whitecaps; another it is as fertile and calm as the valley it inhabits. And yet in a magical way it contrives to be always the Allegheny, always the same face, whatever the expression on it, and always beautiful." Tom Jarrett's photographs in this section, as elsewhere, are more than fine photography, they are a love offering. Perhaps the greatest service this book can render is to win recruits to Frank W. Preston's grand concept that the Allegheny is a recreational resource of such unique value that it should be made a valley park all the way from the New York line to Pittsburgh, except for existing communities, many of which are more beautiful from the water than from the land.

Peterson writes poetically of animals and plants without taking poetic license with facts. It took as momentous a past event as an ice sheet to shove him into error, and anyone save a glaciologist can be forgiven for overestimating Lake Erie's age. Mountains count their ages in millions of years, whereas lakes, lovely ephemera of the landscape, tally their life spans in thousands. The ancient rivers of western Pennsylvania emptied into the Atlantic via a preglacial St. Lawrence seaway where Lake Erie now is, but then was not.

Ed Peterson has long been a fine writer and a great teacher of writers; he has now become a great nature writer. His lucid and frequent digressions upon man's relationship to nature merit the acclaim and gratitude of professional ecologists, and his comments upon predators should be read by every sportsman. I'd like to quote dozens of passages; one must suffice: "Life is as precarious for man as for the spider and the fox, and only a few inches of topsoil separate us all from death. Those few miraculous inches give us most of our food, our clothes, our houses, our cocktails and silverware and radios, and the books we read and the shoes we wear and the cool water we drink. Without topsoil and trees on the hillside there could not long be factories in the valley. Without the dogwood and the shadbush that blossom here tonight there could not long be lights in the windows of the city."

No western Pennsylvanian can read this book without learning more about his favorite spots or discovering new places to fish, hike,

or visit. Erie, for example, has "perhaps the best walleyed pike fishing in America," and "Except at Atlantic City, no beach along the Atlantic Seaboard is as long as the beach at Presque Isle."

This book exceeds my expectations for it—and they were high, indeed, because of long admiration for author, photographer, and editor. I wish, however, that the author had soliloquized after one campfire about the often long and disheartening struggles without which there would be today no Penn's Woods West for anyone to love. The beauty spots described and pictured have not come to us as a direct bequest from their Creator, but have been saved from thoughtless despoilation by the intermediacy of far-sighted philanthropists and politicians, business men and scientists, garden club ladies and sportsmen. I, too, have heard "the bawdy scream" of a blue jay in Cook Forest, but the remembered voices of Tom Liggett, Edmund Arthur, and John M. Phillips echoed longer among the pines. And the "thundering white roar" of the falls of the Youghiogheny at Ohiopyle never drowns out for me the gentle voice of Edgar Kaufmann as he walked among the ferns. Other areas have other ghosts, or still living champions. Few parklands have been preserved by spontaneous public demand, or protected thereafter by angels with fiery swords. Mortal men must dream and plan, beg and campaign, to save each such heritage, then fight anew to resist the blandishments of "progress," ever hungry to exploit resources.

Few authors have the inestimable advantage of having a photographer as traveling companion, snapping intuitively the very scenes that will complement the still unwritten words. *Penn's Woods West* was, then, ably designed so that text and illustrations blend in mood and subject. I'm sorry, however, that an offset process was not used, for I am certain that many of the reproductions fail to do justice to the original photographs. A very few photographs should have been omitted entirely.

It is fitting that the introduction was written by A. W. Robertson, who loves trees and has done so much to preserve fine forests in this area. The author is characteristically generous in his acknowledgments, and the relatively few photographs from outside sources are nicely credited. The end papers are superb, and the binding attractive in its simplicity.

Penn's Woods West is a worthy addition to the justly famed series on western Pennsylvania issued by the University of Pitts-

burgh Press with the aid of the Buhl Foundation. It may well be one of the most lasting achievements of the Pittsburgh Bicentennial. Let those who read and cherish it pay tribute to all who made it possible for two men in 1957 to find western Pennsylvania so worthy of their love. Let us travel as far as fancy dictates and purse permits, and return to Penn's Woods West determined, in Lindsay's words, to make our "own home and neighborhood the most democratic, the most beautiful and the holiest in the world."*

Carnegie Museum

M. GRAHAM NETTING

Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder, edited by PAUL A. W. WALLACE. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958, pp. XVII, 394, Glossary 395-447, Index 449-474. \$7.50.

This volume is a valuable though somewhat unusual book. Its title is not a creative design. It is happily derived from a document drawn up, in his old age, by Heckewelder and fittingly incorporated in the volume (pp. 386-391). As the learned author frankly admits in his Foreword it is not a mission study, not a biography and not an ethnological treatise but a travelogue. It is not, however, a typical collection of diaries or journals, for some of them are published with little introduction and less annotation or commentary. The short journals and excerpts from longer narratives, printed or unprinted, many of them translated from German originals, are neatly tied together chronologically and geographically. The emphasis is in accordance with the last three words of the title, and has enabled the author to include several journals (pp. 234 and 339) not formulated nor written by Heckewelder. As language and literature the diary of Benjamin Mortimer (pp. 339-370) is superior to anything by Heckewelder.

The highly satisfactory Foreword is followed by an excellent Introduction on the Moravians, who, as a religious denomination, *Unitas Fratrum*, are claimed as the oldest Protestants. But, "It is missionary work that constitutes their most glorious achievement" (p. 2) and their work with the American Indians was, in the opinion of Wallace, "the noblest experiment in race relations this continent

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