BOOK REVIEWS


Probably all seventeen volumes of the Canadian Centenary Series concern not only Canada and Canadian historians but also other North Americans and Europeans.

This volume emphasizes the essential unity of New France in the broad extent from Louisbourg, through Canada, Ohio, Illinois to New Orleans. Its scope is really much larger. New England, New York and Pennsylvania belong in the picture. The best evidence of this is found in frequent reference to numerous historical works relating to Western Pennsylvania.

A specific aspect of this publication is the large number of illustrations, portraits and scenes. Hardly less significant is the considerable number of drawings of regions, places and fortifications. Unhappily the sources of the items are not always fully indicated.

Admittedly the organization of the volume was a matter of difficulty. The author followed the chronological treatment as primary, but the geographical aspects of the story are not ignored although the geographical presentation involved jumping the reader from area to area with little transition.

The author was probably influenced by the limitations prescribed for the series as a whole. One result is that cultural matters are lightly treated or greatly ignored. This is clearly seen in consultation of the Index, but it also appears in the concept. It is not impossible that the author was unavoidably slanted by his earlier publication (1960), Canada's Soldiers, the Military History of an Unmilitary People. The emphasis in the volume New France is mainly on war, biographies and geography. Politics and government are given little attention.

New France, as claimed by the editors (p. xi), is a work of specialized knowledge. The Notes and the Bibliography are evidence of this scholarship.

The reviewer found little objectionable in the matter of interpretative statements. The typography is distinctly good. The context print is admirable and the smaller type of the Notes and Bibliography and Index is easily followed by most readers.

There are a few minor inconsistencies in the use of italics, but
they are few indeed and a matter of no real importance.

The author, the editors and the publishers are to be congratulated on appearance in print of this valuable, though expensive book.

Professor Emeritus
University of Pittsburgh

This Was Early Oil. By Ernest C. Miller. (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1968. Pp. 211. Illustrations, Index. $4.50 hard cover, $3.00 paper.)

Put a gifted historical sleuth to work on almost any subject and he'll come up with fresh and fascinating information that makes absorbing reading.

That has just happened to the youthful days of the petroleum industry.

Ernest C. Miller of Warren, an oil man for more than thirty years and an oil history writer with a mind like the memory bank of a computer, is the author of This Was Early Oil. The 211-page book has just been issued by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and should soon be on that government agency's best-seller list.

Mr. Miller went back into the contemporary accounts that told the story of the industry and the region of its birth when it was fresh-off-the-press news.

From the Scientific American of February 22, 1862, he reproduces an excellent summary of the industry's first two-and-a-half years.

From Harper's New Monthly Magazine of April 1865, he digs out an article that tells what "The Petroleum Region of America" is like as of that moment.

From the Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Democrat of October 3, 1865, Mr. Miller unearthed an account of a trip to the oil region that contains eye-opening stuff on Pithole.

He presents sketches of people like George M. Mowbray, the chemist who was of so much help to Colonel Drake.

He gives the producers' side of the so-called ills that led to the takeover of the industry by John D. Rockefeller. He includes in his volume a description of that most famous early palace of speculation, the Oil City Oil Exchange.

Most of the material that appears in This Was Early Oil has not