Western Pennsylvania provided President Jefferson with a pernicious example of the hazards of Federal decision-making over routes of commerce in relation to the reality of politics during his second Administration in 1806. The President was authorized to fix the route of the Federally-subsidized National Road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Ohio, and while a planning commission recommended a more direct southerly route which barely skirted the Keystone state, the citizens of the town of Washington, Pennsylvania, bitterly objected to being bypassed. Secretary of State Albert Gallatin expediently reminded Jefferson that Washington County "had always given a 2,000 vote majority to the Republican party" and should the road not go through the town, "the Federalists might win Pennsylvania in the next election." As Peterson narrates, Jefferson "recoiled in disgust; still he submitted, directing the commissioner to survey a route through Washington" and thus the National Road was curiously bent.

While the author unfortunately did not choose to include footnotes, "after considerable agonizing," the bibliography reveals he has fully utilized Jefferson's voluminous papers along with government documents, contemporary letters, newspapers, and a vast array of secondary sources. In short, Peterson's study far surpasses Gilbert Chinard's *Thomas Jefferson* as the best one-volume biography yet written and makes delightful reading for both the lay person and the historian.

*West Texas State University, Canyon*  

**PHILIP A. KALISCH**

**BOOK NOTES**

**Florence C. McLaughlin**


Alice Ford is also the author of *John James Audubon, Bird Biographies of John James Audubon, Audubon's Animals, Audubon's*
Butterflies and Other Studies and an unabridged edition of his 1826 journal. She admirably states in her subtitle her plan for Audubon, by Himself: "A Profile of John James Audubon, From Writings Selected, Arranged and Edited by Alice Ford"; thus, the pioneer ornithologist comes to life through his own words.

It was on his father's Pennsylvania farm, Mill Grove, that he began his first serious study of birds, with the Pewees (or phoebes) in the cave on Perkiomen Creek. Here the nineteen-year-old Audubon, according to Alice Ford, also experimented with arranging birds for drawings, hating the stiff, ludicrous results, and finally improving. He followed LaFontaine's maxim: "Whoever sees much will have much to retain." His drawings and journals are a record of his observations, done with an understanding heart and often with humor.

What impresses the reader is Audubon's consciousness that this potential Eden was already being marred by thoughtless, often cruel, wastefulness, that Audubon was a pioneer ecologist. Even at nineteen at Mill Grove, he recorded that the miller's son had killed the old female Pewee and four young ones for fish bait; that later the cave was destroyed along with "nearly all the beautiful rocks beside the creek, to make a new dam across the Perkiomen." At the Falls of the Ohio, he entered in his journal that Miller Louis Tarascon at dawn fired a small cannon heavily loaded with rifle bullets at the thousands of Canada geese stopping in rock ledges. The miller obtained a dozen or more at a shot, but the geese deserted a rock. He observed Indians hunting swans for food and for feathers for European markets. There are entries on wanton destruction of deer, the gannet, and buffalo. About the buffalo, he wrote: "Before many years the Buffalo, like the Great Auk, will have disappeared . . . . What a terrible destruction of life, and for nothing or next to it. The tongues are brought in. The flesh is left to Wolves and birds of prey, or to rot, where these fine animals fall." He deplored the greedy destruction of noble forests along the Lehigh and of live oaks in Florida. And can the reader envision an Ohio River in which white perch would make their annual ascent from the ocean to deposit their eggs!

Bankruptcy, constant money crises — nothing deterred him from working on his Birds of America, or destroyed the loyalty and faith of his wife and sons. Finally, the publishing of his book . . . .

Much of the charm of Audubon, by Himself lies in his pen pictures of his contemporaries: Major William Croghan, who led
Audubon to a tall sycamore, a kind of high-rise apartment for chimney swifts. He describes Kentucky pioneers at a Fourth of July barbecue; he recounts his disappointing experiences with crabbed, jealous Alexander Wilson, ornithologist. Constantine Rafinesque, guest of the Audubons, hunts plants with Audubon and bats with Audubon's Cremona violin. Audubon loved Englishman Thomas Bewick, and was amused by painter Wesley Jarvis' reply to a request to examine a cage of birds, "Birds, Sir, what the devil do you know about birds, Sir."

There was a runaway slave; and later there was Baron de Rothschild in Audubon's running the gamut of types. Personally, the reviewer was happiest with the description of an Indian princess, in her beautiful dress, riding astride like a man across the prairie.

Truly Audubon has followed LaFontaine's maxim, has seen and retained much. And Alice Ford's book is one to own, to pick up again and again.


Dr. George D. Wolf, the author of this book on American pioneers, is a graduate of Muskingum College and of the University of Pennsylvania, and an Associate Professor of History and Coordinator of American Studies at the Capitol Campus, Pennsylvania State University, Middletown. He has made a study of the Fair Play Settlers, one hundred to one hundred fifty in number, in an area twenty-five miles long, two miles wide, on the north side of the West Branch of the Susquehanna, from Lycoming Creek (Williamsport) to the Great Island (east of present Lock Haven), between 1769 and 1784, with particular emphasis on their Fair Play System.

His conclusions, based on accounts of journalists and diarists rather than hearsay, trace the national and ethnic origins of the settlers, their American sources of emigration, and their struggle for survival in the wilderness. Many of them were squatters, almost forty-nine per cent Scotch-Irish, twenty per cent English, and fifteen per cent German. The Scotch-Irish, fiery and politically independent, were not welcome as buyers of land in southeastern Pennsylvania; hence they were on the extreme frontier, practically displaced persons
in their new country. Scotch-Irish, English and German, and others, all out of range of the government, set up their own political system.

Under this system, three Fair Play men were elected annually to hold legislative, executive and judicial authority over the residents, with no appeal from their decisions. Newcomers took an oath to submit to this law, and had to receive the approval of their future neighbors before settling. Evidently the decrees of the Fair Play men were just, for when the system ceased after the Stanwix treaty of 1784 which brought the area within the legal limits of Pennsylvania, their decrees were received in evidence, and confirmed by judgments in law courts.

Their problems, including “the Great Runaway” in the summer of 1778 caused by an Indian uprising, their stand at Fort Augusta that enabled the Continental Congress to carry on, their backbreaking work, their pleasures, their religion, their close-knit families, are part of this interesting book. And did they or did they not celebrate their own private declaration of independence under the famous elm of Tiadaghton?


This study on Western culture, in its original form, appeared as Dr. James M. Miller’s doctoral dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of Pennsylvania State College; he is presently a professor of English in Waynesburg College, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Miller limits his study to 1800-1825, since 1800 marks “approximately the end of the pioneer period in the upper Ohio Valley, and the beginning of a period of development during which the permanent centers of population were established and permanent culture began to assert itself.” The four most influential centers of population in cultural development are Pittsburgh, Marietta, Cincinnati, and Lexington, in a geographical area including “that portion of the West along the Ohio River between the Eastern mountains and the Falls of Louisville.”

His definition of culture includes the “efforts of groups of people to improve their intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic environment offered as evidence of a germinating culture,” measured by group attainment and including the contributions of the Indian, the
trader, and the settlers themselves.

Taverns, Dr. Miller contends, had great social and cultural importance in dissemination of news, discussion of politics, meeting places for elections, muster days, court sessions, and dances. Churches, obviously, were moral and spiritual mentors. Schools were high on the list, with special praise for the secondary level and colleges, and for the pioneers' concern for education on all levels. The roles of doctors, lawyers, and newspaper men are given serious consideration. The admiration for the classical tradition in architecture and oratory, the first attempts at writing poetry and novels, ethnic influences on culture, and many more things make Dr. Miller's book a valuable contribution to the history of the upper Ohio Valley.


Dr. Lewis Atherton believes that merchants were the very backbone of the Western movement, the neglected, unsung heroes. Canny land speculators realized their importance, often giving them town lots on which to erect a store. Often, like Ninian Edwards, merchants were men of many parts, who practiced law, farmed, invested in real estate, established saw- and gristmills and manufactories such as rope walks; who rose high in politics because they knew everybody, gave customers advice, wrote their letters, bartered goods and groceries for crops, acted as informal bankers — in fact became bankers. In general, merchants were men of little formal education with an urge for self-improvement.

For years they made an annual trip to eastern seaboard cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York, to select their year's supply of merchandise. Fine, if everything arrived in good condition; but the sinking of a boat, a theft, or a fire could mean bankruptcy. Merchants by nature were conservative, at first Whig, then Republican. In religion, they were highly Presbyterian or Methodist. They were for reform and improvement of the non-radical variety, were the first to back canals, river improvements, new hotels, Chambers of Commerce. Their wives were leaders in church and charity. Merchants took promising young men of honest character into partnership, who, often like Horatio Alger heroes, also became wealthy, after keeping the stores open for their employers for twelve hours daily.
Some merchants started out as peddlers, then opened stores, gradually introducing luxury items. In large towns, merchants prided themselves on gradually leaving the general store for the wholesale business with a specialty. Everywhere, but especially in small towns, the merchant's store was a center for political discussion and news.

Gradually we see merchants depending upon commission houses and eastern partners for the annual orders, selecting heavy items in Pittsburgh, Marietta, Wheeling or Lexington. Gradually they depended on St. Louis for small, frequent monthly orders. We see the entrance of drummers. We see changes brought about by railroad, canals; with every innovation came a welcome reduction in high freight charges and a guarantee of safe delivery. We see the uses made of the National Pike.

Much space is devoted to Pittsburgh, which had no rivals in the sale of iron ware, and whose business section was soon dotted with commission houses.

*The Pioneer Merchant in Mid-America* must have been an interesting book to research and write.


John Brown, who has long preoccupied American poets, dramatists and historians, appears in this Da Capo reprint in contemporary newspaper accounts of his anti-slavery activities in Kansas; in his seizure of the Arsenal at Harper's Ferry; in his trial, his execution, and his will.

The book also includes sketches of his close followers, and of John Brown's idea of government. Especially interesting are descriptions of the reactions of townspeople during and after the raid and trial of John Brown, the spread of rumor, hysteria and a spirit of vengeance. There is the quiet appearance of Colonel Robert E. Lee on the national scene. The reader is impressed with Brown's firm precision at the trial and at news interviews; with his last letter to his family and with his will.

Victorian theatergoers usually had a short play, a curtain-raiser, before the main attraction of the evening. This book on John Brown recounts the journalistic curtain-raiser of the Civil War.