BOOK REVIEWS


Charles Stotz is a man of extraordinary versatility and breadth of talents. In addition to his other professional duties, he has performed very broad architectural services on some forty buildings or complexes of buildings historically important to Western Pennsylvania. These include Fort Ligonier, Old Economy at Ambridge, and Pittsburgh's first and only historical museum, the Fort Pitt Museum at Point State Park.

The Museum is very much a Stotz product. It was based from the first on his years of researches and writings on the history and architecture of this region for the period 1750 to 1800. He organized a historical advisory committee of five appropriate authorities. He designed the Museum building. He developed the historical story line to suit the sequence of cases, rooms and dioramas. He designed some sixty exhibits, calling on the professional services of others to assist him. He wrote the spoken and printed material that accompanies the exhibits. He narrated scripts for five mechanical recordings.

This volume contains the complete text of the captions and scripts Mr. Stotz prepared for the exhibits, supported by keyed photographs of nearly half of the exhibits and by other illustrative material. In addition, Mr. Stotz has added a philosophical discourse by way of an author's preface; a short account of the national policies and ambitions that led to seven years of war with the French and forty years of war with the Indians; a description of the Museum, its contents, and its unique problems of design; an essay on the architecture and function of the original Fort Pitt; and the story of the inception and development of Point State Park.

The book, like the Museum, has several levels of interest. The casual or beginning reader, seeking to learn something of Western Pennsylvania history, will find here a clear, understandable, illustrated narrative of the exciting but complex events of the second half of the eighteenth century. The student and scholar will find a considerable body of information, closely packed and scrupulously accurate, that will serve as a chronological guide and a source of reference. The military historian will find highly specialized material on fort con-
struction produced by a particular authority in the field. The collector will be interested in the pictures of the tools, artifacts, firearms and edged weapons. Museum people will have photographs of exhibits that are superior specimens of their kind and that, in the larger examples, have an uncanny ability to make the observer feel himself a part of or a participant in the scene.

The writing is simple, clear and as crisp as institutional commentary can be; and sometimes it rises to eloquence. ("From their seats of power in Paris and London two foreign nations contested for the land beyond the mountains in the New World. The native owner of this land, the Indian, was now an ally, now an enemy, but always the tragic figure in the unequal struggle. All three were victors in their time, all losers in the end.") The pages are studded with nuggets of information. (". . . The Ohio River carried 18,000 pioneers in the single year 1788 . . . . By 1830 one-third of the American people, some 3½ million, lived west of the mountains . . . . An acre of timber yielded enough charcoal for one day's operation of an iron furnace . . . . The entire fort, with its outworks, not including the gardens, occupied 17.6 acres. Sentries walked nearly a half mile in making a complete circuit of the ramparts.")

In his introduction to this work, S. K. Stevens, executive director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, calls the Fort Pitt Museum "unique . . . among all museums, large or small," and "without doubt the most complete presentation of this vital era in American history ever put on display." The author declares that Point State Park, when completed, will "take its place among the great city parks of the world, unique in its spectacular setting and rich in historical background." The Museum and the Park are invaluable community assets. One is inclined to think that so, too, is Charles Morse Stotz.

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*Pittsburgh* ROBERT C. ALBERTS