the general reading public. All too many are not worth the paper they are printed on, let alone the exorbitant prices demanded. Happily, the book under review is both worthwhile and inexpensive.

*Signers of the Declaration* is divided into three parts: a historical survey of the events which led to the adoption by the Second Continental Congress of the Declaration of Independence, short biographical sketches of the men who signed the document, and descriptions of the signers' homes that have survived the expansion of the United States since 1776.

By far the weakest section is the initial one. It is too brief, oversimplified, and lacking in an appreciation of the complexity of the revolutionary movement. It likewise reflects little of the recent scholarship of the period. Readers willing to persevere, however, will be amply rewarded by the following pages. Therein are found brief accounts of each signer, as well as a portrait. All are depicted in larger than life terms, and several contain minor errors of fact as well as major errors of interpretation. Overall, though, it is a handy summary of the Founding Fathers.

Finally, there is both a pictorial and written record of the houses that have lasted for the past two hundred years. A brief history of each structure, as well as its precise location, is also included.

All told, this book has its faults, but its merits overshadow them. It should contribute to a further appreciation by all Americans of the principles initially endorsed by these supporters of the Declaration of Independence.

Office of State History
State Education Department
Albany, New York

JAMES F. SEFCIK


"They are the abject slaves of routine," Henry James, Sr., acerbically observed of the English in 1856 upon receiving a copy of Emerson's probing study, *English Traits*, "and no afflatus from above or below ever comes, apparently, to ruffle the surface of their self-
complacent quietude. They are not worth studying." But of course they have been, as this magnificently abundant anthology makes clear. English history, England's language and literature, her culture and learning, her great country houses and venerable universities, her historic respect for law and tradition, all of these have been firmly implanted in the mind of every American. To boot, we were colonials in our minds, in our imaginations, until well into the nineteenth century. Hemingway was right; we did not find our own legs until Mark Twain wrote the "American" novels, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*, and they appeared some fifty years after Emerson summoned "The American Scholar" to appear. Professor Commager does not necessarily share this view, but the evidence presented in his selections in *Britain Through American Eyes* substantiates Hemingway's hunch.

The road to independence — with Twain rather than Tom Paine as champion of revolt — was far from straight or smooth; it was long, windy, and with frequent detours. Anglophilia would lay hold of literary hacks (whom Commager includes for perspective) and geniuses and near-geniuses, from Henry James, Jr. (Commager considers him the peer of Emerson as an astute observer of the Mother Country), to the learned John Fiske, historian and popularizer in America of Herbert Spencer. But the vast majority of those who felt called upon to scribble down their thoughts were neither adulators nor bitter critics, though there were some of the latter. The central feeling for most was one of ambivalence — the sort one sees in James, Sr., who wrote perspicuously about Thomas Carlisle (pp. 253-263) while warning others not to waste time studying the English. Even Henry James, Jr., could become exasperated at his chosen countrymen.

Americans in England, from John and Abigail Adams (who shared her husband's eagerness to get back home to democratic Massachusetts since she knew that "I shall never have much society with this kind of people"), through more recent visitors, like Commager himself, were attracted to Wordsworth, Carlisle, Byron, and a host of others; to Oxford, Cambridge, Tintern Abbey, King's Bench; and, most of all, to the people's "practicality." But Americans were equally repelled by the sordid slums of Liverpool (listen to Melville's outcry, pp. 214-221) or London (witness Jane Addams's revulsion, pp. 500-506); by the rural poverty; by the class system that seemed to prevail in religion, education, and politics and that stifled freedom. And just as "practicality" was the most commonly admired virtue, so, too, was it the most infuriating vice when Americans saw it as "mak-
ing do” with things as they were, regardless of how bad they were.

This ambivalence was grounded in a need for American democracy to have a proper, if surrogate, history and identity. And no one, in my estimation, felt that need more keenly than James Fenimore Cooper who felt the tugs of democracy and the claims of “tradition.” By Twain’s time, however, America had a real history (and literature) and American interest shifted, as Commager notes, away from Britain and to the Continent. Thus it is that this splendid anthology drawn from the diaries, letters, travel books, and magazine pieces of nearly one hundred various travelers or residents is really about the nineteenth century and gives us a fascinating panorama of the mind of America. Three-quarters of the material included is from the last century, and, on the whole, the selections from the twentieth century (the last one, a balanced assessment of Emerson’s English Traits by Commager, is dated 1948) lack either passionate curiosity or vitality, though the snippet (pp. 722-728) from Margaret Halsey’s With Malice Toward Some is superb. Her malicious jibes at English inconsistencies make up for the saccharine quality of the next selection.

One has trouble thinking of any other scholar who might have compiled this book as carefully or as imaginatively as Henry Steele Commager. Prolific, humane, perceptive, he has spent part of each year of his life explaining America to the British. He inaugurated the teaching of American history at Cambridge; he has held distinguished professorships at Oxford, Cambridge, and London universities. His book is a model of scholarly editing: the selections have been judiciously chosen and carefully and chronologically arranged to give the full sweep of opinions; the titles are pithy; the headnotes are informative, pertinent, and often witty. Even Henry James, Sr., would have approved.

Department of History
Allegheny College
Meadville, Pennsylvania

Bruce Clayton


Constance Noyes Robertson is well qualified to write the account