contribution to American scholarship and is very readable besides.

Old Economy
Ambridge, Pennsylvania


This recent biography of Michael O'Connor, first bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, is a scholarly presentation of the clergyman as a person, as an educator and scholar, a pioneer, a prelate, an administrator, and a controversialist. Undoubtedly, the work is best characterized by the author's prefatory statement, which reads: “The account . . . is that of his [O'Connor's] dedication and drive, of his ideas and deeds, and of his successes and failures as he led Catholicism into the mainstream of the American Catholic experience” (p. ix).

In this publication, the reader is gradually introduced to Michael O'Connor by way of the historical developments which occurred in Western Pennsylvania during the early nineteenth century. Accordingly, the author's major perspective is one which consistently links the origins and expansion of Roman Catholicism in southwestern Pennsylvania to the total westward movement of the American peoples.

In this respect, Szarnicki's research is a significant contribution to the fields of both church history and the history of Western Pennsylvania within the period of 1843-1860, the era in which Michael O'Connor patterned and formed the foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. The experiences of O'Connor can best be defined as the reader observes him as a young Irishman gifted with superior intellectual powers, who after distinguishing himself as both scholar and theologian in Rome, accepted the appointment as first Catholic bishop of Pittsburgh at the youthful age of twenty-nine. With considerable ease and depth of interest, the reader follows O'Connor's efforts and setbacks during the bishop's seventeen-year episcopacy.

Through the detailed scholarship and literary ability of his biographer, Michael O'Connor becomes in this work a vital and
realistic personality who distinguished himself in a variety of activities, e.g., his involvement in the development of one of the oldest Catholic newspapers, in spearheading the development of Catholic education on all levels in his diocese, in urging the founding of the oldest hospital in Western Pennsylvania, and in his affiliations with various religious congregations which he brought to the Diocese of Pittsburgh to satisfy the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Beyond these levels of his active ministry, Bishop Michael O'Connor is clearly portrayed in this book as a nineteenth-century personality expressing a twentieth-century mentality.

Because this volume is exceptionally well documented — an extensive compilation of primary source materials is included — the reviewer is tempted to categorize the work in a complimentary manner as being genuinely a "historian's biography." At the same time, however, the author's consistent style and his well-balanced presentation of facts, enriched by his sensitivity towards human interest elements make this biography an appealing reading experience for the general public as well.

Appearing occasionally throughout the publication, the graphics and illustrations created by Marty Wolfson contribute artistically to the overall design and format of this biographical account of Michael O'Connor, First Bishop of Pittsburgh.

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PATRICIA A. HODGE


In 1972, Floyd E. Risvold, Minnesota businessman and American history buff, bought a manuscript based on the assassination of President Lincoln. The acquisition changed his daily routine for three years, as he "tried to run a business while seemingly living in the America of the nineteenth century."

Mrs. Alma Murphy Halff had sold Risvold the manuscript, which had been completed in 1902 by her uncle, Louis Weichmann. He had been chief government witness at the trial of John Wilkes