BOOK REVIEWS


In view of the great number of studies of Major General Edward Braddock's defeat, the question may well be asked: "Why one more?" The justification for this volume lies principally in its well-ordered assembly and arrangement of all important well-known or reputed eyewitness accounts, and its survey of the principal previous works on the subject.

The book is clearly and interestingly written. It shows that the author has done a great deal of extensive and intensive research in both source materials and the literature, but the thoughtful reader might question the resulting judgment of the values of primary materials. Kopperman places great faith in the so-called Cholmley's Batman account (in Braddock's Defeat, Charles Hamilton, ed.), although on both literary and historical evidence it appears to be a rank forgery; and he refers to what he calls "British A" (Hardwicke No. 136) as "aside from Cholmley's Batman, . . . the most important of our anonymous reporters." The former is, if not wholly a forgery, completely untrustworthy, and the latter is also full of errors. The author might have been warned by many indications, such as that both soldiers (apparently near the head of the march) indicated an ambush (the batman asserting he was within about ten yards of the guides who "spied the Indiens lay'd down Before us," British A saying the action began when "our first flank upon the left was fired upon"). The batman previously stated that they marched "Beating the grannadiers March all the way," although good evidence would indicate it had not then been composed. Indeed, it is doubtful if such a character (a British personal servant) ever existed, since Halket's orderly book quotes an order that all batmen were to be chosen from American recruits unable to fight. Had Kopperman not limited his study so closely to the battle itself, he might have recognized the weakness of these two exemplars.

The author stoutly defends Braddock, laying almost the entire blame for the fiasco on the panic of the troops. He might well have considered Caesar's comment (when warned that his army would
desert rather than face the Germans — a fairly close parallel to this situation) that such an action would indicate a weakness in the general who led them. Not infrequently Kopperman bowls over evidence against his view by simple statements, like, "I have previously pointed out that [some contrary indication] may have been possible." Possibility is not evidence.

_Braddock at the Monongahela_ is not likely to be counted among the great works on its subject, such as those of Sargent, Parkman, Pargellis, and Gipson. But it is a convenient handbook of well-ordered materials on its subject.

*Pittsburgh*  

**George Swetnam**


It is somewhat misleading to suggest that this "is the first published book dealing with the Stamp Act Congress" (p. 12), for in doing so Weslager implies that the historians who have previously dealt with the Stamp Act crisis, including Edmund S. Morgan, have paid no attention to the congress itself called in 1765 as a response to the acts of Parliament — a judgment that is not correct. Nevertheless, it is the author's intention to fill a perceived gap in the historiography of pre-Revolutionary America. Weslager regards the congress as a decisive first step by the separate colonies toward a unified American perspective, a development essential for later efforts at the time of the Revolution. He has written this book for the general reader interested in events contributing to the origin of the American nation. Weslager's volume is one of the products of the bicentennial celebration, and as such is neither the best nor the worst of that era.

The organization of this study is simple and straightforward. The congress held in New York City during October 1765, is the focus. Accordingly, Weslager successively discusses the events leading to the assembly, the participants in it, the deliberations themselves, the formal resolves of which a copy is printed in full in the journal, and the results of the meeting. The Stamp Act Congress, he judges, was not a convocation of rebels attempting to foment or engineer a rupture with England, but rather a gathering of concerned but loyal colonists who hoped for a more advantageous economic and political relationship