BOOK REVIEWS


In this highly readable and historically sound monograph, Professor Illick adroitly writes of the founding and colonial development of one of the more cosmopolitan and least homogeneous of the English mainland colonies. For many reasons the study of colonial Pennsylvania has fascinated both the serious research scholar and the dilettante. The fusion of the pacific Quakers (mostly English), various Rhineland pietistic and pacifistic sects, determined German Lutherans, oppressed Irish, and the frequently obstreperous Scotch-Irish led to a colonial history which was at once both peaceful and troubled. It was peaceful in that William Penn and the Quaker oligarchy in general treated the Indians with more justice and consideration than either the Puritans of New England or the grandees of the South, and it was troubled because the non-Quaker majority increasingly resented oligarchical rule.

The author develops his interesting narrative somewhat too simplistically and at times too artificially around the lives of Pennsylvania's two most notable individuals — William Penn and Benjamin Franklin. This almost biographical approach to the complex history of colonial Pennsylvania is both the book's strength and weakness. Focusing on the lives and careers of such luminaries as Penn and Franklin can prove useful to highlight personal achievements as well as general trends, but it can also distort if not diminish the influence of such as geography, groups, and lesser-known persons. Also in the case of the two men highlighted in this book, they are totally and completely atypical and nonrepresentative of Pennsylvania's heterogeneous population. Even so, this approach does add interest to what is already a fascinating and exciting historical narrative.

Although the narrative includes the major incidents from the founding in the 1680s to the promulgation of the democratic state constitution in 1776, the author is at his best in describing the earlier years. Building upon his excellent study of Penn (William Penn the Politician, Ithaca, New York, 1965), Illick demonstrates once again his mastery of the complex issues surrounding the founding and early years of Penn's "holy experiment," the growing disenchancement
of many Quakers with Penn's benevolent autocracy, the politically significant split between David Lloyd and James Logan, and the emergence of Philadelphia as an important center of trade and commerce.

In honesty, however, Illick appears less sure of his sources and knowledge, but only slightly so, when dealing with the more perplexing issues, conflicts, and personalities of the mid-eighteenth century. Although Benjamin Franklin's "behavior was pragmatic rather than dogmatic" and his "expressions were aphoristic rather than philosophical or theological," it is not patently evident that "the second half century of provincial life reflected" his influence (p. xviii). Franklin was certainly one of the most engaging and personable individuals of the entire eighteenth century — on both sides of the Atlantic. After 1757, however, this versatile and talented man spent most of his remaining years first in England (1757-1762 and 1764-1775) and later in France (1776-1785) and thus became increasingly unwilling or unable to influence and direct either America in general or Pennsylvania specifically. Indeed there were times when Franklin seemed totally out of touch with provincial sentiments, such as during the Stamp Act crisis. Despite the author's disclaimer, his frequent insertion of William Penn and Benjamin Franklin into the generally interesting and edifying narrative seems "heavy-handed" (p. xviii).

The biographical sketches of many of the men who did not rank with Penn and Franklin in influence and importance are useful and show a consistency with the author's implied assertion that the history of a period or location can be learned best through the study of the "movers and shakers." Thus, besides the heavy emphasis on Penn and Franklin already alluded to, we are treated to attractively written descriptions of the activities — primarily political — of such notables as James Logan, John Dickinson, Joseph Galloway, Andrew Hamilton, David Lloyd, Isaac Norris, Israel Pemberton, and Charles Thomson. The result is a well-written, biographically-oriented historical survey of colonial Pennsylvania which will satisfy both scholar and layman.

This volume in the Charles Scribner's Sons' series, A History of the American Colonies, maintains the generally high standards for readability and sound scholarship of the five others of the series already published. It is hoped that this auspicious and indeed substantial start to a badly needed revision of our colonial past will soon be completed and readily available. Scholars will find the seventeen-page bibliography useful, while all will find the numerous illustrations and
maps helpful and well done, as well as interesting.

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The Old Northwest in the American Revolution: an Anthology.

The coverage of this volume is somewhat broader than the title would imply. Of its twenty-one essays, only eight deal with the Revolutionary War itself (and one of these is devoted to the west as a political factor in the peace negotiations); five address the period 1760 through 1774; and the remaining eight treat the post-Revolutionary period.

Inherently, any anthology will be marked by variations in style from essay to essay, by repetitious coverage, and by a diversity of themes. In this case, also, there are some variations in quality. Without quarreling with the editor’s decision to include items from both scholarly journals and from what he describes as “so-called popular histories,” it must be stated that in the latter cases the selections do not always live up to his claim that their “scholarship was of high quality.” In at least one instance, the rather free-wheeling “popular” style of writing, while adding to readability, has resulted not merely in misleading oversimplifications but in demonstrable errors of fact.

With only one or two exceptions, even the essays on the period of the war emphasize not operations but strategy — in the broadest sense of the term, stressing political and economic rather than military strategy. In that particular context, the maps which are included are excellent, although less ideal for anyone seeking to follow the course of such campaigns as took place. It is also regrettable that more than passing reference to the wartime operations out of Fort Pitt down the Ohio and up the Allegheny is not included.

Nevertheless, this book makes valuable contributions in several respects. It counterbalances the common tendency of historical writing about the Revolution to concentrate so exclusively on the northeastern and middle Atlantic regions as to leave the impression that the war was restricted to those areas alone (except for Greene's campaign and the siege of Yorktown, even the southern theater has been some-