BOOK REVIEWS


In this judiciously edited compilation, Louis M. Waddell has made inexpensively available selective extracts from landmark documents which "represent or describe significant themes in Pennsylvania colonial history" (p. iii). The tercentenary of the commonwealth is perhaps the appropriate time to pause and reflect on both the uniqueness and representativeness of the early years of the Keystone State. Not surprisingly, Dr. Waddell, associate historian of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, has selected those documents which best illustrate the uniqueness of Pennsylvania during its first one hundred years. Founded initially as a New World haven for Quakers, settled by German, Scotch, Welsh, Scotch-Irish, Swedish, as well as English immigrants, inhabited by people of varied religious beliefs and backgrounds, and chartered originally as a proprietary colony, Pennsylvania and its colonial history has much of interest and value for the layman and scholar alike.

The value of studying history through the reading of primary sources should be obvious. By reading the original document, the student (when reading primary historical sources we are all students of history) does not have to rely on the interpretation of others but can interpret for himself according to his own background, knowledge, experience, and need. It has been said that history is what historians say it is. Certainly in many secondary historical works the biases, prejudices, and predilections of the author are both obvious and subjective. Now with this collection of readily available excerpts of important primary sources, the student can read and therefore interpret for himself or herself the documents which delineate and explain Pennsylvania's colonial past.

Most of the major themes of the commonwealth's colonial period are included in this potpourri. For example, the first seven documents deal with some of the unique features surrounding the founding of Pennsylvania by William Penn in 1681. Thus the most pertinent sec-
tions of the March 4, 1681, charter of King Charles II to William Penn, the three so-called frames of government, and the Charter of Privileges of 1701 are included to depict the struggle between William Penn's Quaker idealism and the reality of founding a New World proprietary colony under extreme and difficult circumstances. Much of what made colonial Pennsylvania unique and interesting stems from the person and thoughts of William Penn. The relative religious tolerance practiced, the relatively democratic government established, and the heterogeneousness of the early population all attest to the general liberality of the founder and can be discerned in these "founding" documents.1


Included in this collection are not only extracts from official governmental acts, charters, and constitutions but also segments of private letters (such as George Washington's letter to Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia, July 18, 1755, following General Edward Braddock's defeat), a portion of perhaps the most famous autobiography in American literature—Benjamin Franklin's—and Indian chief Teedyuscung's brief but poignant speech delivered at the 1758 Indian Conference at Easton. The editor has selected wisely and appropriately. The result is a cross section of historical documents, both public and private, which depict graphically the major themes of colonial Pennsylvania history.

Besides the "Founding Documents," the essential documents for even a superficial understanding of early Pennsylvania would include the Germantown Protest of 1688 against slavery, Benjamin Franklin's essay on "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind," the famous (or infamous?) Walking Purchase Treaty of 1737, those delineating the Quaker resignations from the Assembly in 1756, and the justly famous democratic state Constitution of 1776. All of these essential documents are included in this collection.

Of particular merit in this compilation are the editor's informative comments introducing each document. Enough of the historical background is given to help the reader to an understanding of the document's importance. Perhaps the editor should have written an expanded introduction which would have included a brief survey (of no
more than five or six pages) of Pennsylvania colonial history. Such a survey would have enhanced the value of this book for those unfamiliar with the commonwealth's colonial past.

Dr. Waddell and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission are to be commended for making available this popularly-priced, paperback edition of selected historical documents. This collection can be profitably used by student, citizen, and scholar.

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**J. Edgar Thomson: Master of the Pennsylvania. By James A. Ward.**

Taciturn to the point of awkwardness, terse in his professional correspondence, childless and unattached to any family save that he found in the business world, the Pennsylvania Railroad's third president created a series of roadblocks for the biographer. Ward solves the problem (if, indeed, it has a solution) by focusing almost exclusively on his subject's business ventures. Thomson began his career in railroading in 1827 as a rodman on a survey crew. In 1834 he became chief engineer for the Georgia Railroad. He accepted a similar position with the Pennsylvania in 1847 and held its presidency from 1852 until his death in 1874. Thomson's investments on his own account are also treated at length.

The book is perhaps too much filled with the nuts and bolts of corporate life: board meetings, bond issues, and the like. Behind it all, however, is the author's firm grasp of the inner workings of the business corporation; an ability to read between the lines of minutes and reports; and a commitment to discovering what was typical and what was unique in Thomson's life. Thomson emerges withdrawn but not dull. He pioneered in the separation of ownership from control, in decentralized management systems, and in rate-fixing. He seems to have shared his contemporaries' conservative social values (slaves were property, unions unnecessary, government generally a nuisance). Unlike the Vanderbilts and the Goulds, however, Thomson cared deeply about the mechanics and technology of railroading and, until