Again, this book is sound, scholarly, and worthy of careful reading and analysis. It deserves a place in the library of every student of "The World of William Penn."

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The Year the Freshet Didn't Come . . . Based on a diary by Charles H. Raymond, 1854-55. Edited by Carolee K. Michener and staff of the Venango County Historical Society.

(Venango County Historical Society, 1984. Pp. viii, 98. Illustrations, index. $7.00.)

Admittedly, most diaries are dull. They rarely furnish substantive information or go beyond daily temperature readings and highlights of family gatherings. So, it is always refreshing to read one that is both interesting and historically significant. The Year the Freshet Didn't Come, based on a diary written by Charles H. Raymond, 1854-55, is such a work.

Raymond kept the diary as a young man while operating the family store in Utica, not far from Franklin, Venango County, Pennsylvania. His father, A. W. Raymond, settled the French Creek Valley community that he named after Utica, New York, and became its postmaster in 1836. The business acumen of the senior Raymond passed to the son. They were successful in operating the general store, a mill and foundry and, later, oil wells in the Franklin area.

Economic historians of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania will find much that is useful in Raymond's diary. Pages from his store ledgers and descriptions of business transactions, including costs and prices, provide a clear insight to the economy of rural Pennsylvania and the quality of life of its residents. Secondly, and equally important, the diary confirms what we already suspected regarding the network of commerce. The farmers and manufacturers of northwest Pennsylvania in Raymond's time were as dependent on the Pittsburgh markets as their forebears had been in the 1790s. Erie, Meadville and Franklin remained the pivotal points on the North-South axis of regional trade that linked the Great Lakes to the forks of the Ohio. Finally, Raymond portrays the pain and misery of hard times — bad harvests, starving
livestock, debts, and the difficulty of getting goods to market. As the title of the book suggests, when the creeks and rivers could not be used, economic times were indeed bleak.

Still, Raymond does not confine himself to a mere description of the community’s economic life. Current events, national politics and foreign affairs also receive his attention. Nor does he hesitate to express his opinion on these matters. Though he had limited formal education, he was a reader who followed the news with keen interest. His comments imply a responsible attitude. He was active in the church, the temperance movement and a local literary society.

Raymond’s diary is well edited. Carolee K. Michener and the staff at the Venango County Historical Society deserve praise in preparing this work for publication. They are particularly effective in supporting the original diary with inventories, letters from the Raymond family, and information from the Venango Spectator, a weekly newspaper published at Franklin. These help provide a strong historical context for the diary.

The Year the Freshet Didn’t Come is a fine addition to a growing list of publications of primary sources on the history of northwest Pennsylvania. As more of these sources are being discovered in historical societies and private collections, historians are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of this region of the state. Probing these sources will generate study in a neglected area of Pennsylvania history.

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In this work, Patricia Bonomi draws upon her own research as well as an impressive array of recent studies to present a new synthesis of colonial religious history. Rejecting the view of a declension during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, she asserts that a “rising vitality in religious life” and an “increasing interpenetration of religion and politics” characterized the era (pp. 6, 8-9). Unfortu-