

volume honoring both it and coeducation leaves the actual story unclear. ■

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Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker

By Kathleen Brady

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. Pp. 255. Notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95 paper

KATHLEEN Brady's penetrating biography of Ida Minerva Tarbell portrays an enigmatic figure who lived a life of paradox. According to popular lore, Tarbell's place in history derives from two sources: the fame she earned as a "muckraker" after her investigation into Standard Oil's questionable business practices, published in 1902 by *McClure's Magazine*, led to a government inquiry that resulted in the court-ordered breakup of the monopoly; and the fact that in the process of becoming a powerful and respected public figure, Tarbell challenged the gender convictions of her day. Brady's meticulous research, however, yields a different story; Brady's Tarbell appears as a conflicted individual, unable to reconcile her private needs with the demands of her public persona.

Born in 1857 in a northwestern Pennsylvania log cabin, Tarbell grew up in a household of unfulfilled ambitions. Franklin Tarbell, her father, was a small-time independent oil entrepreneur whose financial success was stymied by the Rockefeller family's eventual dominance over the oil industry. Her mother, Esther Tarbell, "had grown up with the Women's Rights movement" (page 23) and "churned with the injustice of woman's lot" (24).

Esther had taught school before marriage and apparently reveled in her short-lived independence. According to Brady, Ida's mother never reconciled the subjugation she felt with the assumption of wifehood and motherhood. Evidently, Esther imparted these strong feelings to her oldest daughter.

A dreamy, shy young woman, Ida had a difficult time finding her niche in life. As a youngster, she was fascinated by nature and briefly contemplated a career in biology. She graduated from Allegheny College in 1880 and taught school for two years before resigning because she considered herself a failure in the classroom. Eventually, she became a writer and then assistant editor for *The Chautauquan*. A conflict with her boss, the Reverend T.L. Flood, led to Tarbell's departure from the magazine in 1890. Once again, Tarbell considered herself a "failure and a disgrace" (47). "Haunted by Flood's prediction that she would starve" (47), Tarbell fled to Paris, where she determined to take up a career as a free-lance writer. She flirted with poverty and the bohemian lifestyle before her stories captured the attention of editor and newspaper syndicator, Sam McClure. When she returned to the United States in 1894, Tarbell went to work for him. Her biographies of Napoleon Bonaparte and Abraham Lincoln, serialized in *McClure's*, brought Tarbell fame and established *McClure's* reputation as one of the leading periodicals of the day.

According to Brady, Tarbell was never comfortable with her success, perhaps because she believed that she had paid too high a price for fame. In early twentieth century America, public achievement for women came at the expense of a traditional family life. In a series of articles begun in 1912 on the "Woman's Question," the single, childless Tarbell exalted the roles

of wife and mother and voiced the opinion that "women lacked the vision necessary to achieve greatness" (202). In a thinly veiled attack on the teachings of her mother, Tarbell decried the "militancy of the 1870s" (201). She suggested that young girls (such as herself) had been duped into believing that marriage was a form of slavery and that a "worth-while life" (24) was attainable by seeking higher education and a profession. Thus, although Tarbell's life experiences embodied the aspirations of the "New Woman," she earned the wrath of leading feminists of the day such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelly and Charlotte Perkins-Gilman by publicly rejecting their ideology.

In retrospect, Tarbell's Standard Oil series may have been the high-water mark of her career as a crusading journalist. (It is interesting to note that Tarbell remained unsure as to her claim to fame and

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"could never decide if in fact she had been a muckraker, journalist or a historian" [175].) According to Brady's chronicle, even as the Standard Oil story was unfolding, Tarbell's involvement in a new venture as co-owner and co-editor of the "kinder, gentler" periodical, *The American Magazine*, seemed to signal her retreat from muckraking. The magazine, Tarbell wrote, "had little muckraking spirit. It did have a large and fighting interest in fair play; it sought to present things as they were, not as somebody thought they should be" (194).

The American aimed to increase its circulation by appealing to readers interested in literary works and pieces on popular culture rather than investigative reporting. Sto-

ries on "the theatre, the latest play and the most interesting actresses" (194) frequented the pages of the magazine. Even when the editors included stories reminiscent of *McClure's* crusading spirit, the difference in tone between the two periodicals was appreciable. "The upbeat style of *The American* was an attempt to reform the country by pointing out what had been repaired rather than what needed to be reformed" (184). Except for her series on the tariff issue, which appeared sporadically in *The American* between 1906 and 1909, Tarbell's subsequent works disappointed those who had admired her relentless, hard-hitting style. Although she wrote movingly of the plight of female factory workers, she also praised the scientific management techniques advocated by Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford's brand of industrial paternalism. In addition to the women's articles which feminists found so odious, her sympathetic and uncritical biography of Elbert H. Gray, chairman of U.S. Steel, and a naive three-part sketch of Benito Mussolini were written, in Brady's estimation, because Tarbell needed money.

Although the feminists' blueprint for a "worthwhile life" (higher education and a profession) brought Ida Tarbell fame, independence, in the form of economic security, remained elusive. Tarbell earned a comfortable living for a single woman, but as the most successful and stable member of her family, she became the economic and emotional mainstay of her aging parents, her sister Sarah, and her brother Will and his family. When her father died, he left behind a modest estate which his son eventually squandered away. Sarah, whose health was precarious, achieved only marginal independence when she followed in her older sister's footsteps by shunning marriage in favor of an undistinguished career as a painter. For almost 30 years, from Will's

BOOKCASE

The Twentieth Century History of Beaver County Pennsylvania 1900-1988

Edited by Cheryl Weller Beck

The Beaver County Historical Research & Landmarks Foundation, 1989. Pp. 644. \$50, plus postage

THE most comprehensive history of Beaver County to date, this volume was researched and written by a 17 member team of scholars under the direction of Cheryl Weller Beck; it picks up on the county's history where Bausman's 1904 history left off. The chapters cover topically virtually every category of history from religion and education through business and sports, to name a few. More comprehensive than interpretive, its rich detail makes it an ideal research volume.

A Pennsylvania Chronicle: The History of Marshall Township

By Judith Oliver

Marshall Township, 1988. Pp. 452. \$10

Beginning with the early "[p]eople [who] lived in Marshall Township 10,000 years ago," this book focuses on the evolution of the land, people and institutions that became the township. It contains rich detail on a corner of Allegheny County about which little has been written. The illustrations, ranging from photographs of arrowheads to township maps, echo the book's unusual broad sweep, punctuated with selected details. This would be a useful addition to the library of anyone interested in regional development.

The Carnegie Nobody Knows

By George Swetnam & Helen Smith

McDonald/Sward Publishing Company, 1989 (new edition; first published by Twayne Publishers, 1980). Pp. 186. \$14.95

This book draws attention to the literary side of the great industrialist, and to his writings which have been largely neglected. Focusing on the author's literary ideas and style over the span of his life, the book points to the authenticity of and consistent patterns in his works. While no attempt is made to explain away the ambivalent sides of Carnegie, this book, by virtue of its unique perspective, provides an interesting counterpoint to the most prominent historical perception of the man.

Galusha A. Grow: The People's Candidate

By Robert D. Ilisevich

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. Pp. 319. \$39.95

This biography of Grow, known most for his tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives, captures the conflict-ridden pre-Civil War era, underscoring the ways in which Grow personified the era's rebellious spirit that manifested itself in new political alignments. Grow represented a vigorous abolitionist constituency in northeastern Pennsylvania. The book charts the course of his political career from free-soil Democrat to Republican to Speaker of the House in 1861.

mental collapse shortly before World War I until his death in 1941, Ida bore the burden of caring for the family. Thus, it is ironic that the spinster found relief from the pressures of family life only when she died in 1944 at the age of 86.

While Brady's biography captures the paradoxical nature of Tarbell's life experiences, it falls short of placing those experiences within the complexities of her time, of explaining why that which seems enigmatic about Tarbell's life might also express some of the tensions of that period. Nevertheless, Brady provides a thoroughly insightful narrative of Tarbell, the writer, and Tarbell, the woman. ■

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The History of the Duquesne Club

By Mark M. Brown, Lu Donnelly and David G. Wilkins; Robert C. Alberts, editor.

Pittsburgh: the Duquesne Club, 1989. Pp. xii, 188 pages. Foreword, introduction, acknowledgements, appendix, notes, index.

WRITING institutional histories is a difficult job at best. The historian frequently ends up with a chronicle of anecdotes and unrelated topical treatments in an effort to satisfy all parties underwriting the book. Evidently the Duquesne Club in Pittsburgh gave free rein to the authors, for Brown, Donnelly and Wilkins avoided the usual pitfalls. Even the origins of the book are somewhat unorthodox. Unlike most books of this nature, this is not a centennial volume; the Club was founded in 1873 (even though it displays 1881, the year of its incorporation, on its logo). The book is due in part to the Club's

Art and Library Committee's earlier success, *Paintings and Sculpture of the Duquesne Club*, by David G. Wilkins. It also results from Mark Brown's organization of the Club's archives, to which he and the other authors were apparently given unlimited access. Since their efforts inevitably produced three distinct writing styles, the committee decided to engage the talents of Robert Alberts as editor. The book is an all-Pittsburgh undertaking, the authors being locals. Brown is a graduate student, Donnelly is a historical consultant and Wilkins is the chairman of the Fine Arts Department at the University of Pittsburgh. Alberts's books on the history of the H.J. Heinz Company, and most recently, the University of Pittsburgh, have established his credentials in the field.

Since its founding 116 years ago, the Club has been the downtown home of the city's business elite, eclipsing every other club, although the Pittsburgh Club has been held to be even more exclusive. In 1890 the Duquesne Club moved to its present location on Sixth Avenue, rather symbolically across the street from two other institutions of considerable influence, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and the First Presbyterian Church. Even the building itself is something of a symbol. Its first story, with its rough-hewn stone and Romanesque arches, is vaguely reminiscent of another local landmark, architect H.H. Richardson's county courthouse — so very Pittsburgh.

The Duquesne Club is, of course, much more than stone; almost since its founding, membership in the Club has been "a mark of success equal to ordering a custom-built yacht or commissioning a building from architect Paul Rudolph" (page 137). From the perspective of an individual, this is important, but from society's vantage point the organization can be understood differently.

In many ways the Duquesne Club is, as the authors aver, "a microcosm of the social history of Pitts-

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burgh and of the United States" (ix). Typical of Pittsburgh and the United States? Hardly, but decisions made within its walls have enormously affected the city and even the nation. Likewise, the social environment has greatly affected the Club. It is precisely this two-way relationship that *The History of the Duquesne Club* treats so well.

The book is arranged chronologically into 10 chapters and an epilogue. The authors did not intend that each decade be treated equally. Indeed the 1970s and 1980s are discussed in a single chapter while the halcyon 1920s merit an entire chapter. Although each chapter includes the almost obligatory discussion of Club operations (e.g. the cuisine, service, decor, admissions policies, etc.), it studiously avoids that most common feature of histories of this genre, namely being a who's who of club luminaries. It presents selected individuals in specially demarked sections (e.g. Gurdon F. Flagg, who was manager of the Club for half a century), but mostly it treats individuals as they relate to the Club's history. Of particular interest was Carl Banning, a German-born member who, upon seeing a parade of soldiers marching past the Club, remarked that they were like "sheep going to slaughter" and that they looked "like a bunch of bums" (63). The year was 1918 and the soldiers were off to fight the Kaiser. Banning was not only expelled from the Club but also imprisoned for a