

BOOK REVIEWS

Pittsburgh, The Story of a City. By LELAND D. BALDWIN. (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1937. xiii, 387 p. Illustrations, maps.)

IN 1931 a survey of the field of western Pennsylvania history was launched under the joint auspices of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and the University of Pittsburgh with financial assistance from the Buhl Foundation of Pittsburgh. Under the capable direction of Dr. Solon J. Buck the survey undertook an extensive five-year program of research that has culminated in the production of a series of ten volumes treating various phases of western Pennsylvania history. Dr. Baldwin's book is the first of the series to appear in published form.

In large part the study of local history has proved primarily interesting to the antiquarian and the genealogist. The guild of professional historians has been slow to recognize the fact that national history is based in the last analysis upon local history, and so there have been few examples of the type of local history that stresses the relationship of the community to state and national history. This function has been happily performed by Dr. Baldwin's work, which shows clearly the ebb and flow of movements, political, economic, social, and intellectual, that have impelled Pittsburgh to make its contribution toward the realization of the American dream. Some half-dozen attempts at a history of Pittsburgh have been made, at sundry times, starting with the pioneer volume by Neville B. Craig, first published in 1851, and including the more compendious works of Boucher, Wilson, Fleming, and others.

Opening in the middle of the eighteenth century with a contemporary view of the setting at the Forks of the Ohio, Dr. Baldwin's narrative moves at a rapid pace as it traces the genesis of the city. There are vivid descriptions of the contests between the English and the French for the possession of the key to the Ohio Valley, of Washington's first visits to the western country, of Braddock's defeat, the Forbes expedition, and the construction of Fort Pitt. During the Revolution Pittsburgh remained at the periphery of the conflict, although it was strongly enough moved by the hysteria of the hour to stage a tea party of its own and furnish a contingent of troops that served with the Continental Army in the East. For a time it seemed that the boundary dispute between Virginia and

Pennsylvania might eventuate in such a way as to place Pittsburgh within the confines of the former state, but by 1779 that possibility had been removed. In 1788 Pittsburgh was made the seat of a new county called Allegheny, and by 1794 she was ready to become a borough. In recounting the oft-told story of the Whisky Insurrection, the author draws on his extensive knowledge of that subject to present a happy view of an episode only less embarrassing to its chief actors than the Hartford Convention of a later date.

From this point the purely chronological treatment of the subject is abandoned. There are parallel chapters dealing with the rise of river trade and transportation, with the pioneer industries iron and glass, with educational gropings and literary growing pains, with the acrimonious disputations of the Federalist junto and the "clapboard democracy." The incorporation of Pittsburgh as a city in 1816 sounds the keynote for further advance. In succeeding decades Pittsburgh wins for herself the sobriquet of "The Birmingham of America" and enters upon a period of rapid growth. In succinct fashion the author delimits the problems to which this gave rise: fire protection and police protection, the water problem and sanitation, labor disputes and the care of the indigent, the flight of population to the suburbs and the search for improved means of city transit. These problems Pittsburgh shared in common with her sister cities throughout the nation, and so it is hardly surprising to find her responding to the current reform movements of the day, to the catch phrases which arrayed Whigs and Jacksonian Democrats against each other, and finally to the summons to the defense of the flag, when the secession issue was posed in 1861.

The post-Civil War period is treated in cursory fashion. There are chapters on "The Forge of America" and "Two Generations of Progress" and then an Epilogue which ventures to peer cautiously into the future. In his preface the author excuses the brevity of his treatment of this period by pleading lack of time and the peculiar difficulties which obstruct the writing of contemporary history. The reviewer must be pardoned, nevertheless, for wishing that it had been possible to allot a fuller treatment to Pittsburgh in the Machine Age. For instance, some will feel that the part which the House of Mellon has played in the development of Pittsburgh might well have been dealt with at greater length, and still others may note the failure to take into account the findings of the famous Pittsburgh Survey made by the Russell Sage Foundation in the years 1907 to 1914.

Dr. Baldwin frankly avows that his book is "not for historians." It is, he in-

sists, an impressionistic picture of the city's development, seeking mass effects rather than minutiae of detail; feeling, drama, and atmosphere rather than text-book completeness. From the standpoint of these objectives he has registered a rousing success. His book is eminently readable, his anecdotes are happily chosen, and throughout he presents an animated panorama of characters and events. The *dramatis personae* includes a galaxy of personalities. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Isaac Craig, Mike Fink, Simon Girty, Joe Barker, Anne Royall, Jane Swisshelm, Stephen Collins Foster, Captain Schenley and his bride, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and Matthew Quay illustrate the variety. Those historians who disregard "no trespassing" signs will find *Pittsburgh, The Story of a City* remarkably free from errors. The paper mill at Brownsville was established in 1797, not 1796 (p. 114), and the Republican national convention that met at Pittsburgh in February, 1856, could hardly have desired "to remove the unholy Buchanan administration from power" (p. 310). But these are very minor blemishes. There are four maps, a serviceable index of thirteen pages, no bibliography, and no footnotes. Printed from Caslon type, splendidly made, and attractively illustrated by Ward Hunter, the volume is a credit to both author and publishers.

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Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi, the Water Way to Iowa. Some River History. By WM. F. PETERSEN. (Iowa City, The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1937. 575 p.)

THE FLIGHT of the Mississippi from Lake Itasca (so christened, from "*veritas caput*," by a member of the Schoolcraft expedition of 1832) once reached a thundering climax at the Falls of St. Anthony. The Falls have long since been reduced to a ribbon flowing against concrete; historically, the site is the head of navigation on the great river. From Minneapolis, then, 600 miles to the mouth of the Missouri, and the tiny distance farther to St. Louis, is the locale of this nostalgic, affectionate book. Some attention to the Ohio River, with its older history of steamboating, is inevitably a prelude to the author's major interest. The Fulton-Livingston endeavor to secure a monopoly of steamboating privileges in the West, the voyage of the pioneer *New Orleans* from Pittsburgh, and the ventures of Henry Miller Shreve, are described with some spirit. In