

Reviews

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, MEDICINE

TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY AMERICA:
Needs and Opportunities for Study. By
Brooke Hindle, with a directory of arti-
fact collections by Lucius F. Ellsworth.
Chapel Hill: University of North Caro-
lina Press. 1966. \$4.50.

The history of technology is a new discipline impressive in its early achievement, the solidity of its scholarship, the grace of its practitioners' prose and the energy it has expended to keep the rest of us briefed on the state of the hypotheses which it is testing. This volume answers the important questions, "Where do we stand?" "Where are we going?" "What do we need?" and, most important, "What have we got which men in other fields ought to know about?" If other fields developed spokesmen as thoughtful and articulate as Mr. Hindle, American Studies would be stronger than it is, for their works would enable students of the culture to speak with confidence that their words reflected the results of current scholarship.

In his survey of approaches to the history of technology, Hindle mentions American Studies, the history of science, literary scholarship and several others. I would suggest that he add to his list the works of Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan's following makes him almost a fad, but his popularity should not blind us to some genuinely valuable insights he has into the influence of technology on patterns of thought. Hindle himself comes quite close to McLuhan's approach in discussing Oliver Evans: "When, before it was possible to travel in steam vehicles, Oliver Evans spoke of the exhilaration to be anticipated, he was not thinking of monetary profit at all. He was participating in the fulfillment of an unfolding technology." He goes on:

Perhaps technology was not so much a tool or a means as it was an experience -- a satisfying emotional experience. When it became possible to make thread and cloth by machine, they were so made; when boats, trains, and mills could be driven by steam, they were so driven.

These things could be accomplished only to the extent that economic needs and social attitudes permitted; but is it not possible that the more elemental force was within the technology itself? (24)

This seems quite close to McLuhan's explanation of how a medium is a message; his definitions of media always include technology.

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Readers of this journal are already aware, from the work of Eugene Ferguson, of the technological historian's fascination with the period 1776-1850. Hindle calls the achievements of that epoch, "epic," and feels that they need to be studied

. . . not alone as a story within the history of technology but as a central thread in American history. In the perspective of the general historian, does not this define the era with far more justice than the westward-moving wagon trains, the Age of Jackson, or the battles over the tariff? Indeed, these episodes, which still constitute the warp and woof of traditional history, are understandable only in terms of the technology which rebuilt the floor under the pontificating senators even as they declaimed and which shaped and reshaped the tools required to conquer a continent and to erect a variant civilization. (18)

How useful technological history can be for understanding of American culture Hindle illustrates tentatively and briefly, but convincingly, through reference to "The Wooden Age." The American penchant for wood ". . . subsided from its peak before mid-century, but it had many results and ramifications and it continued to differentiate America from Western Europe." (26) Hindle suggests that we need sophisticated scholarship to explore the relationship between reliance upon wood and the spread of machine production, the development of labor-saving machinery and the "character of magnitude" which Europeans thought they saw in American technological thinking. "The big questions about social history," he says, "must be kept in mind even to get the most out of an investigation of the shape of a screw." (28)

It seems important that scholars in Mr. Hindle's young field explore these issues, and even more important that they continue to make the effort to communicate what they have found to other students of American culture. The rest of us are too liable to assume that these are questions of merely antiquarian interest, or that they are too obvious -- that any fool knows technology changed the world, and that that is all there is to it. In point of fact, if one examines one's own values and attitudes, one finds that one's relationship to contemporary technology is not at all simple, and that the scholar of the future, attempting to understand us in terms of the attitudes

we carry in relation to the automobile, television, the telephone and so forth would be far more than an antiquarian, for these are a large part of our lives and our personalities. The student of a technological culture must know the feel of the technology or he cannot know the culture.

The largest section of the book (29-94) is "A Bibliography of Early American Technology," also by Mr. Hindle. It alone would justify the publication of the volume, for it is intelligently critical, honest about its necessary limitations and a fine introduction to the shape of this provocative field. The book concludes with Lucius F. Ellsworth's "A Directory of Artifact Collections." Mr. Ellsworth's task is an exceedingly difficult one, since in a great many communities, local historical societies feel in a general way that it is a good idea to hold on to old artifacts. There are countless little museums and collections, some of them specialized because of the nature of a local industry, but most just general collections of old things which their owners had not the heart to throw out, and so donated. I have found the staffs of even many of the better organized collections cooperative but generally uninformed, and quite bewildered by even the simplest historical questions. Mr. Hindle's bibliography should give invaluable guidance to institutions which would like to set their houses in order, and to make them attractive to scholars; university personnel in any of a number of different fields could do a great service if they were to make themselves available to such museums, to give a hand in organizing what they have in ways which will enable them to say something. In return, many of these places can provide volunteer manpower to do the sort of cataloging and sorting needed to make the collections more useful to specialists. I found it difficult to judge the quality of Mr. Ellsworth's selection, but it gives every surface indication of being the work of a pro. I have one addition to suggest, under his heading "II C, Farming": the Agricultural Hall of Fame, in Bonner Springs, Kansas, which has a sizable and rapidly growing collection of tools and home living items. The curator is Elmo Mahoney; the executive vice-president tells me that the Hall would like to make itself useful to scholars of agricultural history and technology, but has thus far encountered difficulty in obtaining the foundation support it needs. It will soon have its own library, and the staff, while clearly amateur, seems right-minded and cooperative.

SGL

SWORD OF PESTILENCE: The New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853. By John Duffy. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1966.

Historians increasingly have used epidemics to study a society's cultural characteristics, and Professor John Duffy has added a valuable

descriptive work to this literature. While regional specialists will find the detailed account of life in New Orleans particularly interesting, social historians will also find much that is suggestive. The failure of municipal government during the epidemic and the emergence of extra-governmental organizations could be usefully compared to similar situations in urban centers whose demographic and cultural characteristics were different, while attitudes toward sanitation and health controls mirror the larger issues of social welfare and the individual's role in society. Professor Duffy, for the most part, leaves these judgments to the reader, and the book would have benefitted from a broader conceptual framework, but this comment aside, his description of the yellow fever in New Orleans is a useful, lively and interesting piece of historical scholarship.

University of Missouri

Roderick E. McGrew

THE TRANSPORTATION FRONTIER:
Trans-Mississippi West, 1865-1890. By
Oscar Osburn Winther. New York: Holt,
Rinehart and Winston. 1964. \$4.50.

One of the volumes of the impressive Histories of the American Frontier series, this is an up-to-date synthesis of western transportational development, focusing primarily upon the 1860's and 1870's. It tends to be traditional in approach, descriptive rather than interpretive. Based on broad research, especially printed journals, guidebooks and travel accounts, it ranges in some detail through such topics as overland migrations, freighting and stagecoaching, steamboating on inland waterways (but not by sea), the construction and operation of the railroads, the bicycle and the Good Roads movement, with a liberal smattering of "Indians, Outlaws, and Wayfarers" (bandit Black Bart gets ten times as much space as James J. Hill, builder of the Great Northern Railroad).

University of Illinois

Clark C. Spence

LITERATURE AND THE WEST

FRONTIER: American Literature and
the American West. By Edwin Fussell.
Princeton: Princeton University Press.
1965.

In this exercise in "imaginative historiography" (vii) Professor Fussell sees nearly all pre-Civil War American literature as shaped by metaphorical ideas of the West or (an interchangeable term) the frontier. At times this perspective yields up startling insights. "The Wild West show comes to a rude end with the Boss blowing up his own 'civilization factories'

on a 'kind of neutral ground.' " This scene in Twain's Connecticut Yankee is the "symbolic explosion" of the frontier metaphor (24)! Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" is "about American Advance to the West" (83)! Pearl in The Scarlet Letter is "the Spirit of the West, the rising glory of America" (98)! Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" is a "parable of American history" (165) and the Red Death is the Indian (166)! The chapter on Thoreau and Walden rests at the center of this book, perhaps because the case for seeing Walden in this special perspective is most convincing. Or perhaps the author would say that the concern with the West as metaphor is least disguised there -- in fact, not disguised at all. On the other hand, "The White Whale was Melville's symbol of the essential, universal West" (280), in other words the symbol of a symbol!

The more extreme of these readings are startling because no one approaching the works in a "new-critical" spirit would be at all likely to come up with them. A cultural assumption underlies them all. Professor Fussell shows that the frontier was often defined, imaginatively, as the neutral territory on which opposites are reconciled. By extension, then, any ambiguity, any fact capable of contradictory interpretations, could be seen in terms of the frontier metaphor. This way of seeing was a living option until about mid-century or slightly after, and then the frontier as fact ended, leaving only a mopping-up operation. Compared with the serious and manifold meanings invested in the terms "West" and "frontier" by the great American writers of that time, the interpretations of Frederick Jackson Turner and his followers in the twentieth century must be regarded, Professor Fussell concludes, as "sentimental-antiquarian West-mongering" (435).

Professor Fussell's imaginative historiography carries him farther than most readers may wish to go, but few will remain entirely unpersuaded. The book opens vistas and raises questions. For example: since American concern with reconciling opposites did not cease with the frontier, what replaced the West as the dominant American metaphor for this activity?

University of Nebraska

Robert Narveson

MARK TWAIN: *Écrivain de l'Ouest*. By Bernard Poli. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1965. F 34.

Until recently French criticism of American humor has been remarkably weak. The difficulties lie in the nature of l'humour as compared to l'esprit or le comique and in the unique cultural background of American humor. Professor Poli, a student of Roger Asselineau, not only overcomes those difficulties but explains the necessary background. His purpose is to place Mark Twain in his cultural setting, in terms of both the myth and the

reality of the American West and its relation to the East. He succeeds so well that his book ought to be required reading for all French readers of American literature, and -- because of his ability to see regional America from a cosmopolitan point of view -- it should rank among the best books on Twain in any language.

The author has studied the Mark Twain papers at the University of California and has been counseled by Henry Nash Smith. He has assimilated the now vast Mark Twain bibliography. There are details of interpretation of facts and of material from secondary sources that one might argue with, but on the whole there is soundness and balance.

It is the synthesis of the facts, and the critical insights into Twain's life, work and milieu that make the book outstanding. Recognizing both Van Wyck Brooks's and Bernard DeVoto's portrayals of the West, Poli delineates the true picture, including its conflicting aspects: "This mixture of dreams and reality, of deception and illusion, explains the complex character of the notion of 'the Frontier' in the United States and lets us understand why, with all the dynamism and nostalgia it contains, it has become part of the national mythology." And he is particularly astute at defining the conflict within Mark Twain between a desire which he shared with other Western writers to be recognized in the polite literature of the East, and a realization that his chief stock in trade to gain that recognition was the boisterous humor and local color of the West. He was angered that "a villainous backwoods sketch," the "Jumping Frog," should be the key to his acceptance in the Eastern papers in 1865; and the conflict continued in one form or another throughout his life.

Perhaps the best part of Poli's book is his analysis of Twain's humor -- an analysis that relates itself to every facet of the study. "Mark Twain utilizes at least three types of humor . . . the 'tall tale' which baffles and intrigues, the parody which leads to the absurd, and the ingenuousness of a child which recalls old dreams." And in all three types the overt participation of the author is part of the comedy.

Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

James C. Austin

SMALL TOWNS

AS A CITY UPON A HILL: The Town in American History. By Page Smith. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1966.

Despite an intense interest evinced by state and local historical groups, by novelists and, more recently, by sociologists, the influence of the small town upon the development of American civilization has never been adequately or systematically assessed. Page Smith suggests that, until the twentieth century, the town has been a basic form of social organization

in America, one that has imposed a "peculiar and distinctive" stamp upon the psychology of the American people. He advances a series of hypotheses designed to stimulate more fruitful research into the nature and influence of the town.

Two types of towns are contrasted. The "covenanted" or "colonized" community was founded upon the principal of mutual consent of members and was characterized by ethnic, religious, ideological or geographical homogeneity. The "cumulative" town, on the other hand, was an essentially fortuitous development, generally an economic venture devoid of an integrating sense of community and comprised of relatively heterogeneous elements. Although he nowhere compares the relative proportion of each of these two types of towns in the nation, Smith's focus is almost exclusively upon the former. Established as a homogeneous entity, the "covenanted" town was essentially a conservative force. The town did not suffer dissent, nor was it innovative. The "rugged individualism" popularly ascribed to the town was an urban, not a town or rural, doctrine. The "village virus," the constricting, stifling pressure for conformity, was inherent in the nature of the community.

Smith challenges the mythology of the town. The conventional portrait of burgeoning American business enterprise in the small town is seen as erroneous. Though boosterism was integral to the town ideology, business failures, often disastrous to the entire community, were chronic. Politically the town was obsessed with attaining and maintaining consensus to the existing orthodoxy; the concept of democracy in a pluralistic sense was alien. But while Smith is intent upon exploding these widely held myths, he accepts and propounds the claim that the "greatest contribution [of the town] may have been in the creation and preservation of a remarkable character type," the inner-directed individual. The small town, he maintains, generated what David McClelland has termed high need achievement, which accounts for the preponderance of individuals of small town origins among the professional elite. The elite in business and the arts, on the other hand, was recruited primarily from the city.

An extended review would focus upon the numerous shortcomings of this provocative book. However, I am inclined to accept Smith's own disclaimers of finality and definitiveness and disregard its deficiencies as inevitable in an exploratory work of this type. It is a valuable work in that it has raised questions of considerable import for the study of American social organization, national character and for the general theory of what have been variously termed "nativistic" or "revitalization" movements. Smith's most important suggestion, however, is that the town be considered generically as a form of social organization integral to the development of American culture. This stimulating series of observations concerning the influence of the town will be welcomed by American Studies practitioners.

University of Kansas

Norman R. Yetman

THE COLONIES

SYMBOLS OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY, 1735-1775. By Richard L. Merritt. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1966. \$6.00.

Historians will be intrigued and bewildered -- perhaps also amused -- by this work in almost equal measure. It is not an historical study. It is the work of a political scientist using quantitative analysis of American colonial newspapers to establish the groundwork for a "generalized theory of political integration" which will be useful "not only for examining the American case study, but also in considering the development of other political communities in the international arena" (x, 183). The specific results of the case study are summarized in fourteen "hypotheses" ranging from "(1) The growth of a rich community life in colonial America was a slow process, resting to a large measure upon the development of common perceptions and experience" to "(14) The mother country followed policies that emphasized divergent British and American perceptions, interests, and moods" (184-85). These tentative conclusions are not likely to surprise the historian. Nor, I suspect, will the political scientist be surprised by the generalizations derived from these "hypotheses" -- such as that "noncontiguous members of a political community tend to develop distinctive ways of looking at themselves . . ." (189). But it is only fair also to note that the conclusions are as a rule eminently sensible and that neither the political scientist nor the historian is likely to find his sensibilities outraged in any serious way. In effect, this is an interesting, if not particularly startling, attempt at an inter-disciplinary study which illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses of such efforts in general. Like most quantitative studies, it is not easy reading but the historian will find some of the statistical information useful, even if it is not likely to change his ideas on the period in any fundamental way. I suspect, again, that political scientists will react in much the same way.

University of Missouri

Thomas C. Barrow

THE LAMP OF EXPERIENCE: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution. By H. Trevor Colbourn. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1965. \$7.50.

The purpose of this book is to study how the American colonists used "history" to bolster their resistance to England after 1763: "The political philosophy of the Revolutionaries is familiar; their historical justification

for independence is not" (vii). Surveying the reading habits, library holdings and writings of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and others, Colbourn concludes that the colonists found the English "whig" interpretation of the past congenial and suited to their needs. Consequently, the colonists' historical perspective consisted largely of a filtered "whig" view of history oriented towards "an idealized version of Anglo-Saxon democracy" while the "historical principles of whiggery relating to the right of resistance, royal prerogative and civil liberty were basic ingredients in the colonial constitutional theory . . ." (6, 193). It might be argued that there was not in the period such a clear separation between "history" and "political philosophy" as Colbourn implies and that consequently the analyses that have already been done of the political thought of the colonists have made us more familiar with their historical rationalizations than this book suggests. Still, it is useful to have the material tied together in one package in this way. And not the least of the virtues of this book is that it is superbly written.

University of Missouri

Thomas C. Barrow

SLAVERY, THE CIVIL WAR, THE SOUTH

A HISTORY OF NEGRO SLAVERY IN
NEW YORK. By Edgar J. McManus.
Syracuse University Press. 1966. \$5.95.

This is a social, economic and legal history of Negro slavery from the beginnings of the institution under the Dutch to the end of the institution in 1841. Slavery was successful in colonial New York because of the shortage of skilled workers and the proficiency of the Negro artisan. It declined after the Revolution because the increase of white workers depressed wages and made slave labor too expensive.

Professor McManus demonstrates that the New York Negro played a positive role during New York's history of slavery. He justly concludes that Negro slaves contributed to the economic prosperity of the state, that they acquired a high degree of skill and that they often forced their owners to manumit them.

Most of this excellent brief study is focused on the eighteenth century. By 1800 most white New Yorkers were antislave. Unfortunately, they were also either anti-Negro or indifferent to the problems of the free Negro, so that the New York freedman faced a system of "racial bondage" which was often harder to fight than slavery.

Temple University

Howard A. Ohline

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CIVIL WAR MANUSCRIPTS IN ILLINOIS. By William L. Burton. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. 1966. \$8.50.

One of the happier consequences of the four-year long centennial commemoration of the Civil War, to which Americans were exposed with varying degrees of awareness, has been the publication of articles, monographs and bibliographic reference works that contribute much to our knowledge of that struggle. This book, sponsored by the Illinois Civil War Centennial Commission, is one of these; surely it must rank as one of the outstanding contributions of the centennial observance. Professor Burton has provided an invaluable annotated bibliography of manuscript collections dealing with the Civil War, found in twenty-eight depositories throughout the state. The collections are listed in alphabetical order and are described briefly but substantively by the editor. A helpful and accurate index listing the subject names dealt with in the collections has been included. In view of the pivotal role which Illinois played during the war, this bibliography should prove as indispensable to scholars in other states as it will to those in Illinois. A great deal of careful work and thought has gone into the development of this bibliography and Civil War scholars will find themselves in Professor Burton's debt for his efforts. Considerable credit should also go to the Civil War Centennial Commission of Illinois for having made the publication of this worth-while reference work possible. "If the Civil War Centennial Commission of Illinois," comments Paul M. Angle in his foreword, "had been responsible for nothing more than this book it would have justified its existence."

University of Illinois

Robert W. Johannsen

THE DEEP SOUTH IN TRANSFORMATION: A Symposium. Edited by Robert B. Highsaw. University: University of Alabama Press. 1964. \$5.95.

This volume, the result of a symposium held at the University of Alabama, contains a useful foreword by the editor, a political scientist at the University, and contributions by a distinguished cross section of scholars, writers and public figures. Luther H. Hodges and Hudson Strode are perhaps the best known of the group. Three main themes of the conference were "Training for Responsible Citizenship," "Challenge to Research," development of the South "Past and Present" and "Changing Literature." The papers are generally excellent, though somewhat uneven. Every author can be considered an expert, or a "primary source," on contemporary trends in the South.

J. Leonard Bates

RELIGION

RELIGION IN AMERICA. By Winthrop S. Hudson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1965.

This is the finest one-volume religious history of the United States. Winthrop Hudson writes very readably and exercises discrimination and balance in the selection of his material. These qualities make a distinct improvement upon the standard histories of his worthy predecessors William Warren Sweet and Clifford Olmstead.

Professor Hudson has not conceived his task narrowly. He has avoided to an admirable degree the everlasting pitfall of the church historian: the writing of a largely internal, purely institutional history of the churches. As the carefully non-institutional title suggests, Religion in America depicts the interaction and mutual influence of religion and secular culture in the United States. This wider outlook is evident, especially in the chapters on the period since the Civil War.

Obviously, in a general history there must be rather heavy-handed selection, omission and emphasis, but Professor Hudson has managed to include a remarkable amount of material without turning his history into a dreary catalogue. That there should be anything beyond a paragraph or a footnote about Eastern Orthodoxy, for example, is remarkable. Professor Hudson devotes several pages to such generally neglected groups. What is more, he handles his immensely varied material with sensitivity and accuracy throughout the book.

University of Kansas

James W. Woelfel

THE GARDEN AND THE WILDERNESS:
Religion and Government in American
Constitutional History. By Mark De-
Wolfe Howe. Chicago: The University
of Chicago Press. 1965. \$4.50.

In this slim volume of lectures, Professor Howe has given new clarity to the enduring problems of religion and the state by treating constitutional doctrine within the dimensions of American intellectual history. He argues that the religion clauses of the First Amendment were products of an evangelical impulse to protect the church from the state. In its recent effort to make equality the central objective of constitutional development, the Supreme Court has sacrificed the integrity of those clauses. It has undermined the original goal of sympathetic governmental neutrality by erecting a rigidly secular doctrine of separation. Howe expresses deep concern about the use of improper constitutional means in achieving legitimate

goals. His is an eloquent plea for intellectual honesty in the shaping of constitutional doctrine.

University of Missouri

David Wigdor

THE JESUITS AND THE INDIAN WARS
OF THE NORTHWEST. By Robert
Ignatius Burns, S.J. New Haven and
London: Yale University Press. 1966.
\$10.00.

The Jesuit author aptly terms his analysis of the Indian conflicts of the Oregon country as "part synthesis, part revision, and part contribution." Relying on a wide range of manuscript sources, including many new ones, he focuses the greatest attention on the treaty problems of 1855 and the wars of 1858 and 1877. Each episode, he argues, emphasizes a different aspect of the Jesuits' work for peace: preventing war, terminating a major war and limiting the scope of a war beyond their control.

Two introductory chapters, a study in depth of the complicated world of the Indian and a penetrating description of the methodology of Jesuit missionaries, provide a stepping-stone for the author's sure-footed trek through the primitive forest of White and Indian diplomacy in the forty years before 1880. Without neglecting the efforts of other peacemakers, religious and secular, Burns sees the Jesuits exploiting their strong influence on the Indians in the direction of peace, according to a complicated pattern that was not pacifism.

University of Missouri

Donald J. Kemper

DIPLOMACY

THE UNITED STATES AND LATIN
AMERICAN WARS: 1932-1942. By
Bryce Wood. New York and London:
Columbia University Press. 1966.
\$11.00.

This volume examines the Latin American policy of the United States as applied to three little-known armed conflicts that erupted in the 1932-1942 decade: the Chaco War (Bolivia vs. Paraguay), the Leticia conflict (Peru vs. Columbia), and the Marañón dispute (Peru vs. Ecuador). The author finds that both U.S. diplomacy in particular and the inter-American system in general were inadequate to resolve disputes among Western Hemisphere nations in the era of the Good Neighbor Policy.

Professor Wood pursues his subject with scholarly thoroughness, but his penchant for introducing insignificant issues and trivial detail often impedes the flow of the narrative.

University of Missouri

Winfield J. Burggraaff

POLITICS, STRATEGY AND AMERICAN
DIPLOMACY, 1873-1917. By John A. S.
Grenville and George B. Young. New
Haven: Yale University Press. 1966.
\$7.50.

Grenville and Young have written an important, indeed, a pioneering book. Eleven interesting essays on the United States as an imperial power advance many new interpretations. For example, the lobbyist, William L. Scruggs, appears as the key figure in Cleveland's Venezuelan policy; Admiral Luce deserves much more credit for the development of the American navy than he has so far received; Cleveland made Hawaiian annexation a political issue, thus forcing the Republicans into a defense of imperialism; and Theodore Roosevelt was simply putting into effect well-laid strategic plans on that famous day in 1898 when he sent the orders to Admiral Dewey.

University of Missouri

Walter V. Scholes