

Both these minor classics were due for reprinting and these new editions will be welcomed. They belong in any collection or library devoted to folklore, British social history, graphics, business or communications history, or Victorian studies. General libraries might consider acquiring them for their visual wealth alone.

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Kenney, Alice P. The Gansevoorts of Albany. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1969. 322 and xxvi pages. \$9.75.

Professor Kenney has in this book produced a notable combination of family history with a convincing insight into a whole cultural complex within our national cultural history.

Histories have recognized, however vaguely, that the Dutch colonial venture into the Hudson River estuary introduced a pattern not modelled on the more familiar British one, but few have explored the nature of the difference, nor its persistence. Even the fact that the Gansevoorts still spoke Dutch in the family in the 1820's is significant.

But Miss Kenney is less interested in language than in the social and political overtones. The difference, she argues, lies in the Dutch medieval and later mercantile inheritance, midway between the Roman and the Germanic, and reaching back to the Dutch trade on the early "frontiers" of the Baltic. The society was mercantile, with a high degree of communal autonomy. Power was in the prosperous families, sustained by judicious intermarriage alliances, and continued by a system of "co-optation," whereby members of the Councils nominated their own successors, with the consent of the overlord. In return, this "patriciate" protected communal interests, and contributed heavily to buildings, bridges and public affairs.

Carried over into the frontiers of Rensselaerwyck and Beverwyck (old Albany), the system favored energetic traders, who developed their own local patriciate on the same principles. So rose the Schuylers, even the Livingstons, within the system. Thus a plebian like Herman Gansevoort, brewer, farmer, could shrewdly advance his fortunes, find modest but useful marriages for his children, and count the rewards. By the time of the Revolution, Colonel Peter Gansevoort, having proved his worth by his sturdy refusal to be intimidated at Fort Stanwix by St. Leger's advance, could be made a brigadier-general, and see his sons advance to a part in constitution-making, to a big house, and a large lumbering operation in the woods of the north. One was a graduate of Princeton.

We cannot, of course, trace a family history in detail, to its final lone representative, dying in 1918 in Albany in a house filled with mementoes of the past. In that story there is room for Herman Melville, grandson of the old general, whose fictional "Billy Budd" reflected a Gansevoort encounter with naval justice.

The Dutch persistence had to yield in time to Yankee pressures, though

even a Martin Van Buren could adapt its ways to party loyalties, and a Cooper find in its past material for a couple of novels.

This is a book, then, not only to delight readers of up-state New York, but one meriting a wider circulation for its contribution to American history, and its example of one valid approach to the overall story.

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#### IN BRIEF

The great scholarly reprint boom marches on and it is encouraging to find ever more folklore "classics," such as Johannes C.H.R. Steenstrup's The Medieval Popular Ballad back in print (Translated by Edward G. Cox; Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1968; pp. 269+xxix, indices; \$7.95; paper \$2.95). A Foreword by David C. Fowler and an informative bibliographic essay by Karl-Iver Hildeman are new to this edition. The modern reader may find much in this volume, first published in 1891 and printed in English in 1914, manifestly outdated (as Fowler suggests, more moderately, in his Foreword). Such statements as (in regard to a stock line the author regards as a late addition to various songs, p. 80), "It must be hoped that in the future efforts will be made to extirpate this weed which has grown up in the garden of our popular ballads"; or (in regard to late changes in ballad music, p. 165), "It ought therefore to be the clear duty of musicians to restore, in any case, a portion of Scandinavian melodies to their former shape" are apt to grate harshly upon our current critical (or, rather uncritical?) sensibilities. Likewise, Steenstrup's dominant emphasis upon sorting out the genuinely medieval ballads from later ones may strike many of us as wasted scholarly energies. Fowler's point that modern research has too often disregarded actual chronology, a point he makes even more forcefully in his own A Literary History of the Popular Ballad, is well taken. But Steenstrup's chronologizing seems often based on tenuous premises. Also, his standards for determining the historicity of ballads, though they in some respects prefigure Vansina, are essentially naive. Yet the book remains, in its way, a sound introduction to aspects of Danish balladry, so important in relation to British materials, and is to be recommended. The simple cover design of this edition is remarkably striking. One peers over battlements into an empty violet (purple? magenta?) skyscape, half expecting proud Lady Margaret's ghost brother to ride up and riddle away in the surreal. One hopes to see other major ballad studies out in similar, relatively inexpensive paperback editions: Hustvedt's Ballad Books and Ballad Men and Friedman's The Ballad Revival for a start, perhaps followed by Gerould's The Ballad of Tradition (the paperback edition of which is apparently still out of print). Semi-affluent folklore students are waiting. ---F. de C.