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## Book Reviews

*French Folklife in Old Vincennes.* By Ronald L. Baker. (Terre Haute: Indiana Council of Teachers of English and the Hoosier Folklore Society, 1989. Pp. 62. Notes, bibliography. Paperbound, \$6.00.)

This little book provides a fresh and revealing look at the forgotten culture which once flourished at French-speaking Vincennes, founded in the 1730s by François-Marie Bissot de Vincennes as part of the French Louisiana Colony. By the 1930s, few living reminders of the city's French past remained, and only a few septuagenarians and octogenarians of French descent remembered old French songs and stories.

About fifteen years ago, folklorist Ronald L. Baker found an unpublished Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers' Project manuscript from 1937 entitled "The Creole (French) Pioneers at Old Post Vincennes." While much of the manuscript dealt with the history of Vincennes, three chapters detailed French customs, songs, and stories as written down by WPA fieldworkers who interviewed the elderly descendants of early French settlers.

*French Folklife in Old Vincennes* is Baker's reworking and reorganization of those portions of the WPA manuscript dealing with traditional material culture and work parties, customs and entertainments, and folktales (the titles of his second, third, and fourth chapters). In addition, the book contains an informative preface and a useful and extensive bibliography listing primarily literature and sources (mostly in English) relating to French-language folklore and folk songs. Baker's first chapter is a brief, well-written history of French Vincennes drawn from other sources, some of which are dated, leading the author to repeat several minor errors (Edmé-Gatien Salmon, for instance, was commissary, not governor, of Louisiana; Vincennes was killed by the Chickasaws near present-day Tupelo, Mississippi, not Memphis, Tennessee).

The second chapter is an accurate, colorful, and valuable account of the material culture of the French settlement. It constitutes, with the last two chapters, the heart of the book and gives the reader French customs, folk-song lyrics (in English only), and tales of old Vincennes as related by the elderly French descendants in 1937. The author has edited these into more readable English than that of the original manuscript, but the occasional French words in the book would also have benefited from editing to elimi-

nate spelling and grammatical errors. Baker also provides useful interpretive material both in the text and in his notes for each chapter.

This book will be of interest to the lay reader and can serve as an enjoyable and worthwhile component of school units on folklore, Indiana and American history, and reading. The folktales on the *loup-garou* (werewolf) and other supernatural phenomena, as well as courting customs and games, are all bound to be of interest. The author's notes and references will be very helpful to those who wish to pursue the material in greater depth. *French Folklife in Old Vincennes* provides an informative and lively view of an important but elusive part of Indiana's cultural history.

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*A Surgeon's Diary: 15th Evacuation Hospital; Experiences in World War II, North Africa-Sicily-Italy.* By Frank W. Peyton. (Crawfordsville, Ind.: Frank Wood Peyton, 1987. Pp. 323. Notes, illustrations, map. \$19.95.)

Reading the pages of another person's diary can be as entertaining and informative as listening in on a party-line phone, and if the diary's pages encompass a major world event the reader's experience adds up to time and money well spent. Frank W. Peyton's *A Surgeon's Diary* provides such an experience.

The major world event covered is the Italian campaign of World War II and its North African and Sicilian preludes. The first Allied offensive in North Africa commenced in November, 1942, with the landing of United States and British troops in Morocco and Algeria. It was in Oran, Algeria, in February, 1943, that Dr. Peyton's overseas experience with the 15th Evacuation Hospital began. The hospital moved forward with the advancing army into Tunis, across the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily, and then into Italy, starting with the bloody experience of Anzio. The diary ends in Milan in September, 1945, following the German surrender.

The unique perspective of *A Surgeon's Diary* is that the war is not seen with the usual dropping of bombs, the destruction of ships, and the shooting down of airplanes, nor from the front line with advancing tanks and infantry. Rather one sees the very personal point of view of a military hospital's admitting and treating physician, whose agonizing tasks were to receive the living victims of war's instruments of carnage, to make decisions, and to do whatever possible to provide relief and save life. The hours were long, but the work was as gratifying as it was agonizing.

At first glance Frank W. Peyton may appear to be an inappropriate person for his wartime task. In civilian life he was an Ob-