

## REVIEWS

### *Baynard Rush Hall His Story*

By Dixie Kline Richardson

(Bloomington, Ind.: D.K. Richardson, 2009. Pp. xxv, 329. Notes. \$21.95. Order from [www.pendandbrushoriginals.com](http://www.pendandbrushoriginals.com).)

Dixie Kline Richardson confesses that for thirty-five years, she has been in love with Baynard Hall, who died in 1863. She further claims to know him perhaps “as well as he can be known” (p. v). Her infatuation with Hall, the first principal and faculty member of Indiana University, is evident throughout the text, which offers a sympathetic and thorough account of Hall’s life as well as an engaging look into his eyewitness portrayal of Indiana in the early 1800s.

In 1824, Hall and his family settled just north of the territory known as the New Purchase, which had recently been obtained through a treaty signed with local Indian tribes. Although Hall never lived on those treaty lands, he titled his book *The New Purchase: or, Seven and a Half Years in the Far West*. The book, first published in 1843, offers a rare depiction of early Indiana life, including the dialect of the local citizens, their

food, their travel challenges, and the illnesses they endured. It also provides a brief history of the formation of Indiana University; of its first president, Andrew Wylie; and of the “Faculty Wars” that threatened the existence of the new college.

Hall’s book is a historical treasure, and because he was an educated man, his reflections provide a particularly valuable window into Indiana’s early history. Nevertheless, Hall’s prose style is ponderous. Richardson acknowledges that his “deliberate jumble of time and his unintentional forgetfulness make it virtually impossible to outline events in strict chronological terms” (p. 103). In addition, Hall uses thinly disguised pseudonyms for all his major characters and locations (including two pen names for himself), and he fails to distinguish between fictitious and factual accounts. As a result, even the most

diligent reader can easily become bogged down in Hall's text.

Yet Richardson clearly accomplishes her goal of reinvigorating interest in Hall and his book. She breathes new life into Hall's history by lifting captivating accounts from his cumbersome rhetoric. The reader is treated to humorous vignettes, such as the description of one of the Halls's earliest encounters with their new Indiana neighbors, who served corn ponies "hard enough to do execution from cannon" during one night spent in a "miserable cabin...a barbarous rectangle of unhewed and unbarked logs" (pp.52-53). Poignant accounts, including the burial of an Indian baby and the loss of loved ones to scarlet fever, illuminate the hardships of life that are otherwise buried in Hall's prose. Throughout, Richardson places Hall's story into historical context, and she includes many anecdotes that significantly add to Hall's memories of events.

By meticulously documenting Hall's life story and offering insight into his personal trials, Richardson hopes to "set the record straight" on a man she believes to have been "mis-

understood, misjudged, and misread" (p. i). Whether or not she succeeds in accomplishing that goal will depend on the views of her readers, some of whom, for example, may consider Hall's harsh depiction of IU president Andrew Wylie unforgivable.

A brief listing and description of the editions of Hall's book (including James Woodburn's 1916 centennial edition), would have been helpful. The lack of in-text citation is the only other detraction from this otherwise impressive addition to Indiana history.

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## *Shadow of Shiloh*

### *Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*

By Gail Stephens

(Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2010. Pp. xiii, 301. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95.)

"Who was Lew Wallace," asks Gail Stephens, in her recent biography of

the famed author and Civil War soldier. "First and foremost," she