

Reviews

INDIANA HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS XIII.

The Swiss Settlement of Switzerland County, By Perret Dufour. Indiana Historical Commission, Indianapolis, 1925, pp. xviii, 446.

Including the index, this volume contains 446 pages, of which the account of the Swiss settlement of Switzerland County, as compiled by Perret Dufour, fills 215 pages, while the Appendix of 128 pages consists of a collection of documents bearing on the same subject. There is likewise a brief introduction by Harlow Lindley. Perret Dufour, the compiler of the History of the Swiss Settlement of Switzerland County, was born in 1807 and died in 1884. He was the son of John Francis Dufour, a native of Switzerland, who arrived in the United States in 1801, and a nephew of John James Dufour, the *avant-coureur* of the Swiss emigrants, and the real founder of the Swiss settlement in the Ohio valley. During his entire life Perret Dufour was an active participant in public affairs and an assiduous and painstaking collector of history material. He served his community at different times as postmaster of Vevay, justice of the peace and as a member of the General Assembly. The historical material collected and compiled by Dufour was put into narrative form in 1869 and in 1876. It is the narrative of 1876 which is used as the text of this volume, the revisions thereof and the additions thereto, together with appropriate material from the manuscript of 1869, being printed as notes to the text which they are designed to fortify and elaborate.

The Dufour history is of first-class historical importance, not alone because its compiler lived through and was a part of the formative period of Switzerland County and southeastern Indiana, but because he has incorporated many important documents in his narrative, has drawn on many sources of information no longer readily accessible, and has transcribed

and preserved many significant and illuminating local traditions.

Aside from a brief introduction, setting out with the year 1765, the Dufour narrative begins with an investigating trip made to America in 1796 by John James Dufour, on behalf of the Vineyard Society of Switzerland, the members of which were contemplating a migration to America for the purpose of raising grapes and producing wine. After extensive wanderings, trafficking and adventures, which took him from Philadelphia to St. Louis, by way of Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Marietta, and back to Lexington and Frankfort, Kentucky, a site for the first vineyard was finally selected by John James Dufour in the Big Bend of the Kentucky River. This vineyard was so prosperous and the outlook so encouraging that in 1800 Dufour wrote to his family in Switzerland, urging them to join him in the prosecution of the new enterprise. Accordingly, seventeen members of the Dufour family, including John Francis Dufour, the father of Perret Dufour, left Switzerland for the new world, and arrived in Lexington, Kentucky, on July 3, 1801. The Dufour family continued to operate the first vineyard as a common property until 1804. Meantime, in 1802, upon request of John James Dufour, Congress passed an act by virtue of which John James Dufour and his associates obtained possession of a tract of land, on a portion of which the city of Vevay was subsequently laid out. These lands were divided among the vine dressers and operated for the "cultivation of the vine" under a covenant, executed on January 20, 1803, which constitutes the origin of the famous Swiss settlement of Vevay and its environs, which has contributed so extensively to the development of the state and the evolution of its political institutions.

From the date of the foundation of the Swiss settlement of Vevay, the Dufour history, which is an exceedingly interesting and sprightly narrative, sets forth with considerable particularity the ethnological ingredients of the new colony; the social and economic life of the early settlers, together with their various occupations; the abundance and mischievous ravages of the wild life of the wooded frontier, such as wolves, bears, squirrels and wild turkeys; the origin and development

of schools; the Indian depredations, with their attendant uneasiness and distress; the organization and adventures of ranger and militia companies; the establishment of Switzerland County and the beginning of county government; early taverns and tavern life; newspapers; churches and religious life; canal companies; state banks; physicians and early medical practice; punishment by whipping, under the ancient code; steamboating on the Ohio River; the visit of Lafayette; the development of public highways; and a miscellaneous collection of equally diverting and informing subjects. One especially useful item of information is the geneological data relative to the early families. Owing to the fact that various items of information seem to have been compiled at various times and have been placed in a more or less logical juxtaposition in the text, the narrative has a somewhat sketchy character, but the picture as a whole is vivid and the general impression gained by the reader is that the Dufour's work has been compiled with care and has been written judiciously and the volume constitutes a worthy addition to the historical literature which the Historical Bureau is making available by its publications.

The appendix contains a reprint of five original documents of great value, including an "Account of the Possessions of the Dufour Family in America, Rendered to the Father" and an elaborate "Daybook of Jean Jaques Dufour of Sales of Montreux, Bailiwick of Vevay, on His Travels". These documents are given in the original French with the accompanying translation on the opposite page.

The Editors of this volume have done an excellent and painstaking piece of work. The text is set out as Dufour wrote it, with all its imperfections and idiosyncrasies intact, as such documents should be. Its value is enhanced by facsimili copies of the Deed of Vineyard Lands granted to the Swiss colonists during the administration of James Monroe; the plat of New Switzerland; the commission of John James Dufour to his eldest son; and specimens of Vevay currency. In addition, there are pictures of the old vineyard terrace; the historic homes of some of the prominent families of Vevay; and the old trunk in which the Dufour papers were

stored. The notes appended to this volume should be particularly commended, as they represent a marked advance in craftsmanship over some of the former volumes in this series. So far as the reviewer is aware, there is not a single reference, allusion or incomplete statement in the narrative, which would otherwise be obscure, which does not have a supporting note, skillfully selected and compactly worded, to supply the facts which are essential to a complete understanding of the text. If editorial skill, persevering industry, and a professional grasp of the subject-matter are essential to acceptable historical compilations of this character, the reviewer ventures the prediction that this volume has "arrived". In conclusion, it should be stated that the volume is supplied with a very satisfactory and usable index.

CHARLES KETTLEBOROUGH.

Annals of Benton County, By Elmore Barce. The Benton Review Shop, Fowler, Indiana, 1925, pp. 134.

Readers of this magazine know of Elmore Barce as a painstaking delver in local history whose offerings in this field for the last ten years prove his interest to be more than ephemeral. Some of his productions during that period have been contributed to these pages, and others have taken the book form. His latest is the *Annals of Benton County*, a neat little volume of 119 pages, which is announced as the first one of a series to follow on the same theme.

The first expression of appreciation of the work of Mr. Barce and of a very few others like him (notably Mr. J. W. Whickcar, of Attica) should, I take it, be of that abiding love for historical inquiry that persists regardless of its thanklessness, so far as the public is concerned. The county history which is frankly that and nothing else does well if it pays the printer, hence the great majority of such productions are hooked up with cheap commercial ventures which use history as a peg on which to hang biographical puffs that are of little interest to anybody except those puffed. Shelves of books of this character prove that history compiled under these conditions is apt to be of limited value, and they are but an aggravation to the person who goes to them in search of worthwhile information.