

Reviews and Notices

Our First Great West in Revolutionary War, Diplomacy and Politics (*The Filson Club Publications*, No. 36). By Temple Bodley. The Filson Club, Louisville, 1938. Pp. iv, 321, illustrated, \$6.00.

The author, by his title, means the region bounded by the Appalachian Mountains, the Mississippi, the Great Lakes, and the northern line of Florida. His discussion centers in that part of it claimed by Virginia under its charter of 1609. His subtitle states very clearly his thesis; "How it was won in war and politics under Virginia's lead and under John Jay's in diplomacy." Dr. Bodley, now in his eighty-sixth year, has spent many years, especially since retiring from the practice of law, in the study of the West in the American Revolution. His *George Rogers Clark* (1926), his *History of Kentucky before the Louisiana Purchase* (1928), and the present volume were largely drawn from the manuscript of a projected, but unfinished, "History of our Revolutionary West in War, Diplomacy and Politics." The present volume embodies some of the material in the two former publications, but presents much additional material upon the struggle for the West.

Under chapter headings of "Politics," "War," and "Diplomacy," Dr. Bodley describes respectively the contention over western lands in the Continental Congress "between states north of the Potomac and two powerful land companies on one side, and the four states south of the Potomac on the other," the campaigns of George Rogers Clark, and the negotiations (perhaps haggling would be a better word) by the United States, and chiefly by John Jay, against Spain, France, and Great Britain for title to the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi.

The land company ventures, especially the Indiana and Vandalia schemes, are drawn as shrewd, unscrupulous speculations, are credited with great influence before the Revolution in England and after the outbreak of war in the Continental Congress, and are held to be the prime force in the opposition of the states without western lands to Virginia's western claims. The New York deed of cession, dated March 1, 1781, is described as a pretense and the New York legislature and members of Congress are represented in the whole transaction as conspiring against Virginia. The influence of Mary-

land in the development of "political expansion under the sovereign control of Congress" stressed by Herbert B. Adams, is denied and the Adams monograph, it is asserted, "fairly bristles with errors of fact and inference."

In the negotiations for peace, Dr. Bodley scarcely deems worthy of mention the theory that Lord Shelburne agreed to the boundary of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes as a gesture of generosity to the United States. Rather, he interprets the English insistence upon compensation for loyalists' property and other contentions as a disguise for the dominant desire of the English to keep the United States east of the Appalachian Mountains.

In some respects *Our First Great West* reads like a polemic against land companies of the revolutionary era, against states north of Virginia, against the Spanish, French and English ministries, and against what might be called standard United States historical writings. At points, the author's indictments are well founded and supported by original sources. In many places, however, he overshoots the mark and gives hostile interpretations based entirely on his own inferences. He is inclined to discredit everything and every person not making for Virginia's possession and later the United States' possession of the West and to credit too much anything or person agreeing with his own view. A curious illustration of this tendency is the emphasis upon Franklin's age and susceptibility to French flattery whenever he disagreed with John Jay, and the emphasis upon his wisdom and shrewdness whenever he worked with Jay.

Dr. Bodley apparently has not made use of some of the important recent publications which cover part, or the whole, of his subject (and which embody additional sources, such as Thomas Perkins Abernethy's *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (1937), and the monograph of Theodore C. and Marguerite Jenison Pease, *George Rogers Clark and the American Revolution in Illinois* (1929)). The number of misprints is larger than it should be, though most of them are not misleading (e.g., p. 130, footnote, and p. 182, in which 1794 is printed instead of 1784.) These criticisms, however, do not imply that the volume is not a valuable and important contribution to our understanding of the movements which affected the West in the Revolution. It is an incisive attack upon many traditional versions and upon some

scholarly versions of these movements. It must be reckoned with in any attempt to reach definitive conclusions. "Appendix A" makes available the curious "Six Nation Deed for Traders" (the "retribution" grant of "Indiana") of November 3, 1768. The Filson Club has performed a notable service in publishing the volume.

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The Territorial Papers of the United States, VI, The Territory of Mississippi, 1809-1817 (Continued). Compiled and edited by Clarence Edwin Carter. Department of State, Washington, D. C., 1938. Pp: 893, \$1.50.

Dr. Clarence E. Carter, of the Division of Research and Publication in the Department of State, has brought our Volume VI of the *Territorial Papers of the United States*. This is the second and concluding volume of the Mississippi Territorial Papers. The papers in Volume V covered the period from the creation of the Mississippi Territory in 1798 to 1809. Volume VI, which covers the period 1809-1817, treats chiefly of the administration of David Holmes who became governor in May, 1809, and served until the Territory became a State in 1817.

In a brief review, only a few of the many problems that troubled Governor Holmes can be mentioned. Many of the papers show the slowness of travel and the uncertainty of postal service. Perhaps two examples drawn from the letters of Holmes himself will suffice. In one of his first letters to President Madison, Holmes remarked: "I left Virginia for this territory early in May and arrived in Natchez on the last day of June" (p. 12). In June, 1815, Holmes wrote to the President asking that he be allowed to make a trip to Virginia in September on account of his health. The letter did not even reach Washington until two months after the date which the Governor had set to begin his journey. Within the Mississippi Territory, which at that time included the present State of Alabama, there were many communities that had no postal service. Citizens were constantly urging, through petitions to the Governor and Congress, an expansion of territorial mail facilities.

If Governor Holmes had been asked to name the two problems that gave him most trouble, his answer—judging