

A History of the Arts in Minnesota. Edited by William Van O'Connor. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958. Pp. 165. Bibliographical notes. \$3.00.)

This is as readable and informative a book as anyone can hope to find on the artistic development of a sector of American society. It is a small volume, but is well-written, full of interesting information, and includes a number of well-chosen illustrations.

History of the Arts in Minnesota is the work of three authors. John K. Sherman has written the section on music and the theatre; Grace Lee Nute has told about books and authors; and Donald R. Torbert has discussed art and architecture. The three essays were edited by William Van O'Connor who also wrote the short but lucid Foreword. One cannot help but be aware of the apparent editorial skill that has resulted in a nice balance of space allotted the authors and in a uniform style of writing that runs through the three sections.

The publication of this book marks the centennial of Minnesota's admission to the Union, and the chapters or sections deal principally with the evolution of the arts during the past hundred years. References are made by the authors, however, to activities and events before 1858, as, for instance, in the discussion of Indian music and the songs of voyageurs, or in the discussion of artists who painted the Indians and sketched frontier scenes as early as the twenties and thirties. The section dealing with books and authors makes some interesting references to early accounts of travel through the Minnesota country, narratives which make up in authentic and forceful description what they lack in literary eloquence.

This small book might well serve as a model for enterprising people in other states who would like to see in print the story of their cultural and artistic development.

John Herron Art Institute

Wilbur D. Peat

The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi. By John Francis McDermott. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Pp. xvii, 211. Numerous illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$7.50.)

"In the history of the theater there are no productions so nearly incredible as the panoramas of the Mississippi. Five times within the 1840's the Father of Waters sat—or kept rolling along—for his portrait. Five times artists made lengthy, laborious, and expensive trips sketching river scenery and then spent weeks and months transferring those sketches to canvas. The originals are all lost or destroyed, but there is little doubt that they were faithful reproductions and that more than once they caught the very being of the Great River. The history of these pictures makes vivid the art business of panorama-making and re-creates the Mississippi which our ancestors knew" (p. 17).

As the preceding quotation indicates, this volume is an account of the panoramas of the Mississippi painted by Banvard, Smith, Stockwell, Lewis, and Pomarède during the 1840's. When one artist claimed that

his panorama was three miles in length, a rival artist claimed that his measured four miles. McDermott concludes that the longest was actually about 3,750 feet. Hurriedly assembled, these panoramas were certainly not artistic masterpieces, but they delighted numerous audiences as they portrayed the wonder, variety, grandeur, and majesty of the Father of Waters, while reel after reel unwound amid exciting and exaggerated commentary. The panoramas are reminders not only of the great importance of the Mississippi for travel and trade in pioneer days but also of its great significance in the minds and imaginations of the pioneers themselves.

Although McDermott indicates that the artists, of course, did not visit all of the places which they painted, this reviewer failed to note any attention to the possibility that the artists made definite use of information and descriptions from the various guides to the navigation of the Mississippi. At any rate, the probability of such indebtedness is obvious, for from such guides much of the Mississippi could have been painted far from the actual site of scenery portrayed. "Borrowings" from Timothy Flint, however, are indicated. The book includes numerous scenes from the panoramas, illustrations of descriptive items, and related pictures.

Indiana University

Donald F. Carmony

Negro Tales from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Calvin, Michigan. By Richard M. Dorson. *Indiana University Publications Folklore Series*, No. 12. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958. Pp. xviii, 292. Indices, bibliography. Paperbound, \$3.00.)

It is appropriate that Professor Dorson present his credentials through the University Press upon becoming the Chairman of the Department of Folklore of Indiana University, although he has contributed an earlier article to the Press in the volume honoring Distinguished Service Professor Stith Thompson, whom he succeeds. Richard Dorson, too, has contributed many articles on Negro folktales to *Midwest Folklore*, also published at Bloomington. The present monograph represents him very well, especially as a cultural historian.

Dorson's collection is unique on two counts. In the first place, the actual collecting on tape of a hundred tales in eight days among Negroes at a time of great racial tension is a notable accomplishment and brought great praise from the dean of collectors, Vance Randolph, of the Ozarks. This technique is contrary to the American tradition of leisurely collecting among a people who accept the interviewer as one of their own. Secondly, the careful transposition of tales from tape to print without the intrusion of dialect rendered orthographically represents a victory. The careful, complete, scholarly notes, cross-indexes, analogues, tale type and motif numbers round out a volume that should please historian, anthropologist, or folklorist. Since the latter half of this work is in reality a continuation of an earlier volume of Negro tales from Michigan (see *Indiana Magazine of History*, LIII [September, 1957], 329-331), this review will be concerned with the