

Beck's ten-page historical and descriptive account of St. Louis in his *Gazetteer* of Illinois and Missouri published in 1822, which says little about the opening years of the city; (3) a brief article, obviously based on Chouteau's "Narrative" in the *St. Louis Beacon* of January 24, 1831, written by "A Creole," in which he corrects a statement he had seen about the founding of St. Louis; (4) a lecture given by Wilson Primm before the St. Louis Lyceum probably in December, 1831, giving a history of the town based on Chouteau's depositions but rejecting his statement that he had been in charge of the beginning work on the St. Louis settlement; and (5) Joseph N. Nicollet's excellent account written in 1842, rich in details derived from the Chouteau papers.

In McDermott's scholarly "Introduction" of forty-three pages, he has enumerated and given the significance of some twenty-five other historical comments on St. Louis written before 1860 by historians and travelers. Also included is a chronology for the years 1729-1821, and a list of selected references for the early history of St. Louis. This introduction is invaluable for, although the "histories" could be located and read elsewhere, their significance might be largely lost without the orientation given here. Few authors would be as ably qualified as Professor McDermott to edit such a volume for he brings to bear on the subject years of research on St. Louis and Mississippi Valley history. He has used footnotes with discretion, confining them in the "histories" to those of the authors themselves.

The book is well executed on good paper with clear printing and is carefully indexed.

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The Quiet Life of Mrs. General Lane. By Victoria Case. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1952, pp. 319. \$3.75.)

Two years ago, A. B. Guthrie, writing in the *New York Times*, asked some significant questions concerning the function and limitations of the historical novelist: "Should he deal with the actual figures of history and the actual events, or shall he go outside them? . . . If he employs the record,

what violence, if any, may he do it? May he invent words for the mouths of skeletons, may he have dead limbs acting as live limbs never did, may he amend the facts, extend the annals?" In answering these questions Guthrie expressed a reluctance to assume that an actual historical personality said or did something that has no support in the record, for "liberties like these tend to muddy history, as the little story of George Washington and the cherry tree has muddied history." What course, then, is open to the historical novelist? If he has respect for the canons of historical scholarship, he will parallel but not employ the record. His characters will be modeled on real characters, they will speak a similar idiom, their adventures will have been suggested by real adventures, but real persons will figure only in the background to establish time, place, and atmosphere.

Judged by Guthrie's standards, *The Quiet Life of Mrs. General Lane* falls short of perfection by no small degree, for it employs as its central figure the wife of Jo Lane, Indiana politician, Mexican War hero, first Territorial Governor of Oregon, and Vice-Presidential candidate in 1860. Victoria Case has an explanation, however, for handling her material as she did. She fell heir to the research of Nina Lane Faubion, a descendent and would-be biographer of the General. Miss Case determined to use this material in writing a novel rather than a biography presumably because Mrs. Faubion "kept in her memory the family anecdotes and interpretations which are now forever lost."

This reviewer feels that such a rationalization is untenable. In the first place, the reliability of family anecdotes is open to question, and family "interpretations" suggest an absence of the objectivity which is the shield of truth. Secondly, it may be doubted whether making up the story from an "inner conviction" of the way Polly Lane must have lived and felt is any guarantee of accuracy.

On the positive side, it must be said that once having chosen the medium for her narrative, the author carries it off as well as could be expected. She writes with vigor and imagination. Arranging in novel form events in the lives of the General and his wife must have been a sizable task, for the range of Jo Lane's interests was wide. If this book fails to enjoy the sales volume of Irving Stone's *Immortal*

Wife, such deficiency will not be due to any inherent inferiority, but to the fact that the main characters are less known to the average reader. An attempt to cast light upon any of the unfamiliar but influential figures in history is in itself laudable, if not salesworthy, however, for it points the way to an area that could be exploited to the advantage of both the historian and the non-professional student of history. Nevertheless, from the scholarly point of view, *The Quiet Life of Mrs. General Lane*, unlike the works of A. B. Guthrie and Conrad Richter, will do little to dispel the widely held notion that the historical novel is the illegitimate spawn of history and fiction.

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Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Petroleum Administration for War. Compiled by James R. Fuchs and Albert Whimpsey. Preliminary Inventories No. 31. (Washington: The National Archives, 1951, pp. ix, 152.)

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Accounting Department of the Office of Price Administration. Compiled by Meyer H. Fishbein and Elaine C. Bennett. Preliminary Inventories No. 32. (Washington: The National Archives, 1951, pp. vii, 108.)

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Bureau of Ordnance. Compiled by William F. Shonkwiler. Preliminary Inventories No. 33. (Washington: The National Archives, 1951, pp. v, 33.)

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Solid Fuels Administration for War. Compiled by Edward F. Martin. Preliminary Inventories No. 34. (Washington: The National Archives, 1951, pp. v, 39.)

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Office of Government Reports. Compiled by H. Stephen Helton. Preliminary Inventories No. 35. (Washington: The National Archives, 1951, pp. v, 106.)

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Bureau of the First Assistant Postmaster General, 1789-1942. Com-