

Insull. By Forrest McDonald. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962. Pp. xvi, 350. Illustrations, notes, index. \$4.95.)

Most Americans old enough to remember Samuel Insull will vaguely recall that he was a Chicago utilities tycoon indicted for fraud after he had fled to Europe. In this lively biography Forrest McDonald, Brown University history professor, goes far beyond the shocking headlines of the early depression thirties. In writing this thoroughly documented study the author had full access to the private papers of the Insull family and to the records of the many companies under the management of the financier. McDonald also interviewed dozens of the men who had known and worked with Insull during his long business career. The result is a friendly but fair biography.

Born of lower-middle-class parents in London in 1859, young Insull at the age of fourteen became an office boy for five shillings a week. In 1881 he came to America and soon was secretary to Thomas Edison, who was busy in New York City commercially introducing his recently invented system of incandescent lighting. As he became the inventor's closest financial adviser during his dozen years with Edison, Insull learned many skills he was later to use in Chicago. He also incurred the enmity of Morgan and other eastern financiers. In 1892 the young English financial wizard moved to Chicago as president of the Chicago Edison Company.

In Chicago Insull quickly worked out the economies of central electric supply and soon was building power plants that were the envy of the industry. He pioneered rural electrification in the farm country of northern Illinois and Indiana and devised new systems of marketing securities that are standard practice in corporate finance today. To the consternation of many of his industrial colleagues he early advocated the regulation of public utilities by state commissions. He cut power rates at every opportunity: in fact his rates were so attractively low that the number of his customers at least doubled every four years between 1898 and World War I. During the war he was so energetic a chairman of the Illinois State Council of Defense that he frequently was ahead of his co-ordinating superiors in Washington. He always stressed the importance of good employee relations and good public relations.

As the reader follows Insull into middle age he may well wonder when this paragon is going to become a scoundrel. In 1926 Samuel Insull was the respected manager of a three-billion-dollar gas and electric empire that served 4,000,000 customers in 5,000 communities in 32 states. In 1928 he started to make mistakes. To offset a raid by Cyrus S. Eaton, of Cleveland, Insull created the first of several holding companies. The bull market sent the prices of the new securities spiralling upward, but in the following panic Insull lost heavily, as did the thousands of little people across America who had invested in his empire. With a series of missteps Insull swamped himself with debt, and his financial enemies moved in for the kill. Soon the press, the politicians, and the courts combined against the fallen czar. He was returned from Istanbul to face a series of indictments but was acquitted on all counts.

In this sympathetic study the author clearly feels that Insull's adopted state and nation did not fully appreciate his half century of effort to make electric power both cheap and widely available. After reading this excellent biography many readers may tend to agree with Forrest McDonald.

Purdue University

John F. Stover

John Francis Snyder: Selected Writings. Edited by Clyde C. Walton. (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1962. Pp. v, 329. Biographical essay, illustrations, notes, appendix, index. \$15.00.)

John Francis Snyder was born in St. Clair County, Illinois, in March, 1830. He died in Virginia, Illinois, in April, 1921. He was by profession a physician and lawyer and by avocation an antiquary, historian, and archaeologist. For the last fifty-seven years of his life he resided at Virginia where he engaged in the practice of medicine, wrote Illinois history, explored Indian mounds, collected natural history specimens, opened a country museum, and promoted the foundation of the Illinois State Historical Society. This volume, made possible by a gift of funds from his daughter to the society, is to commemorate the long and unusually productive career of Dr. Snyder.

The book contains a preface by Clyde C. Walton, a biographical sketch by Phyllis E. Connolly, an appraisal of Snyder as an archaeologist by Melvin L. Fowler, and reprints of some of Snyder's historical and archaeological writing. An appendix contains a bibliography of Snyder's general and archaeological works. The articles reprinted are from the *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, and *The Archaeologist*.

This is a handsome volume, designed, printed, and bound by R. R. Donnelley & Sons. Its tasteful design and faultless craftsmanship would have been agreeable to Dr. Snyder. He was a man not often pleased with the work of others!

Indiana University

Cecil K. Byrd

Our Amish Neighbors. By William I. Schreiber. Drawings by Sybil Gould. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962. Pp. xii, 227. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$5.95.)

This is a delightful book by a professor who has spent decades in the study of the Amish. When Ohio was created as a state in 1803 there was not a single white man in what is now Wayne County. But as early as 1807 Jakob (Jockle) Miller, an Amishman from Somerset County, Pennsylvania, settled in Wayne County only to be followed by others. Today there are over 5,000 baptized Amish members in the four counties of Wayne, Holmes, Tuscarawas, and Coschocton. Schreiber has made a thorough investigation of this sect particularly in Wayne and Holmes counties and has also read widely as his excellent bibliography indicates.