

## Book Reviews

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*The French & British in the Old Northwest: A Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources.* By Henry Putney Beers. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964. Pp. 297. Notes, bibliographical sources, index. \$11.50.)

Bibliographies are the scholar's indispensable comfort, whether they are compiled by the scholar, by a guided aide, or by an independent bibliographer. Most bibliographies have their shortcomings no matter by whom they are compiled. Furthermore, most bibliographies are dull reading. Theoretically, a bibliographer is a gatherer of materials, a compiler of lists of titles, a describer of physical objects, and a discoverer of "ill-considered trifles." It is not (normally) the province of the bibliographer to judge the materials he locates nor to display more than rudimentary erudition.

Mr. Beers has produced an eminently satisfactory bibliography or, as he prefers to call it, "A Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources," for the French and the British in the Old Northwest Territory. The bibliographer's intention is clearly stated in the first paragraph of his Preface: "This volume presents an historical account of the acquisition, preservation, and publication by American and Canadian institutions of the original records created by French and British officials in the Old Northwest (the region south of the Great Lakes) chiefly during the eighteenth century, and of officials and governing bodies of Canada relating to that region."

The materials for deep research in the history of the Old Northwest are listed and described, the present locations of source materials are given, and then—and then the author moves forward into an area usually neglected by bibliographers. He describes how and why and when the documents reached their present repositories, whenever tracing the provenance is possible. Many of his tales are exceedingly fascinating. Mr. Beers could have listed in catalogue form all the information about titles and bodies of material, and he would have compiled a satisfactory list of usable references. His list would have been made up of facts and, except to the specialist searching for those facts, his list would have been dull. However, Mr. Beers has discarded the formal list in favor of an attempt to tell the story of what is available in the field under discussion in as interesting a manner as possible. It was a difficult task he set himself—and he has succeeded magnificently. He has written a guide which can be read for its "reader interest" and which can be used as a means of reaching needed source materials.

Under four principal headings, Mr. Beers gives a succinct historical summary followed by descriptions of organizations or areas which created records and their present whereabouts with some idea of the extent of completeness. For instance, under the heading "The Records of the British Regime" there is a two-page historical sketch continued from an earlier description of the French regime. This is followed

by a rather detailed account of the government of the country by the British (particularly as it differed from French techniques of government). Then come two sections on the records of the two most important sources of documents, the Illinois Country and Detroit. Two important classes of documents are discussed in detail: land records and ecclesiastical records. There are also rewarding discussions of manuscript collections (including bodies of material collected by private individuals and their eventual disposition) and reproductions from British Archives held currently by institutions in the New World.

A final section of the volume consists of bibliographical sources. It is a model of excellence, although Mr. Beers missed the more valuable second edition of the Clements Library *Guide* compiled by William S. Ewing in 1953. A new tool, which may not have come to Mr. Beers's attention, is the series of catalogues of important libraries published by the G. K. Hall Company of Boston. Several of them—the New York Public Library catalogue of its American section and the Newberry's Edward E. Ayer catalogue, for example—cover such large quantities of books that they can be of great value to the student of the Old Northwest.

All in all, this is a fine and rewarding work which will satisfy many, many users.

*The Newberry Library*

Colton Storm

*Messages and Papers relating to the Administration of Samuel Bigger, Governor of Indiana, 1840-1843.* Edited by Gayle Thornbrough. *Indiana Historical Collections*, Volume XLIV. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1964. Pp. vii, 669. Frontispiece, notes, index. \$7.50.)

The administration of Samuel Bigger as governor of the state of Indiana began on December 9, 1840, and ended with the completion of his single term in office three years later. During this critical period he had to cope with many problems which had their inception in previous administrations and which were destined to carry over into several subsequent administrations.

While the problem of an extremely ambitious internal improvements program with its numerous financial ramifications was of primary concern to the Bigger administration, such ancillary problems as the public debt, the state bank, taxation, revenue, and relief laws came in for their share of attention. During this period of recurring financial crises in Indiana there was a tendency to neglect less pressing problems. As a result, attempts to improve public education, care of the insane, and conditions at the state prison were undertaken only half-heartedly. The fact that these attempts were relatively slight, however, does not deny good intent on the part of the governor and legislators alike.

In editing this seventh volume of the Indiana Historical Bureau's series of governors' messages and papers, Miss Gayle Thornbrough was faced with the unenviable task of attempting to present complete coverage of Governor Bigger's administration without benefit of any