

Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution. Edited by Esmond Wright. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966. Pp. 316. Notes. Clothbound, \$7.50; paperbound, \$2.45.)

This book of readings on the American Revolution is considerably enhanced by a forty-page historiographical Introduction by Esmond Wright. In this Introduction the author in turn discusses accounts of the Revolution from the Revolutionary age itself, the Nationalist interpretation typified by Bancroft, the Imperial school which reached its peak in Charles M. Andrews, the Beardian "Progressives," the modern "Neo-Whigs," and the British "Conservative" view of Sir Lewis Namier and his followers. This is a concise, perceptive account which concentrates on causes rather than consequences of the Revolution. It is followed by a useful bibliography divided into the same categories, with the addition of a section on "State Studies."

The remainder of the book does not exactly follow the pattern laid down in the Introduction. Wright has taken his selections from articles published in scholarly journals and in books and has divided them into the two broad categories of "Causes" and "Consequences." His selections on the causes of the Revolution are only from the Imperialist, Progressive, Neo-Whig, and Conservative interpretations. Yet, the most important historians of these groups are well represented: Osgood, Andrews, and Gipson from the Imperialists; Schlesinger and Hacker from the Progressives; Davidson, Harper, and Morgan from the Neo-Whigs; and Namier and Wright from the Conservatives. Wright prefaces each selection with a brief note on the author and his views. Such notes are useful, but perhaps could have been improved for students by a little more information on the historians themselves.

The third section of Wright's book, which contains selections under the general head of "Consequences," is not really dealt with in the Introduction. It begins with Richard B. Morris' well known article on "The Confederation Period and the American Historian," and then has sections on consequences for the United States and for the world. The theme here is of necessity not as consistent as in the section on causes. Perhaps the most interesting selections are Frederick B. Tolles' re-evaluation of Jameson and Louis Gottschalk's discussion of the American Revolution in relation to the French Revolution.

All in all, this volume is superior to many of the books of readings that appear on the market and provides a very useful introduction to historical writing on the American Revolution.

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America's Frontier Heritage. By Ray Allen Billington. [*Histories of the American Frontier.* Edited by Ray Allen Billington.] (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966. Pp. xiv, 302. Notes, bibliographical notes. \$5.95.)

Although Billington in his voluminous writings has produced monographs on many phases of American history, his first love is American frontier history. In addition to this work, he has authored

four other major works on the frontier, the most comprehensive of which is *Westward Expansion*. At present he is engaged in editing an eighteen-volume series entitled the *Histories of the American Frontier* of which this is the fifth volume.

America's Frontier Heritage is in the tradition of Michel-Guillaume St. Jean de Crevecoeur's *Letters From An American Farmer*, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and Frederick J. Turner's, *The Frontier in American History*. Although Billington essentially is in agreement with the basic Turner thesis, he does attempt in this work to indicate the modifications and complexity of the frontier influence as it merges with other factors in the creation of the "American." Generally, however, whenever a historian attempts to balance historical factors, he leaves the thesis muddled and less striking, and this is the case in *America's Frontier Heritage*. Probably Billington's best generalization on the influence of the frontier on Americans is as follows: "To say that three centuries of westering made the people of the United States more democratic or more nationalistic is to invite the criticism of scholars who can prove that this group or that in America was less democratic or nationalistic than such and such a group beyond the seas. Yet one generalization seems justified: the pioneering experience helped exaggerate certain traits until the differences were observable to visitors from other lands" (p. 219).

In *America's Frontier Heritage*, Billington has attempted to identify attitudes and behavioral traits that were judged to be distinctively American by overseas visitors. Traits discussed include social mobility, political democracy, individualism with a sprinkling of cooperation, nationalism, wastefulness, resourcefulness and inventiveness, physical mobility, optimism, ethnocentrism, inquisitiveness, braggadocia, anti-traditionalism, belief in hard work, anti-intellectualism, materialism, and deference for the female.

As Billington attempts to present the pros and cons on the origin and presence of these behavioral traits in Americans, he encounters some built-in obstacles. First, to prove conclusively the origin of a people's character traits is virtually impossible. Second, it is equally difficult to attain the objectivity necessary to analyze scientifically the behavioral traits of a people. Third, it is perhaps even harder to generalize on the average characteristics of millions of people. Considering the magnitude of the problems inherent in research of this nature, Billington on the whole has done a very commendable job in describing and delineating the heritage of the American frontier.

Billington's exploration of sources relating to the frontier has been thorough and comprehensive. Sources which he particularly scrutinized include travel accounts of European visitors to the United States and writings of sociologists, anthropologists, and demographers. One of the most significant portions of this work is the sixty-five pages of "Notes" and "Bibliographical Notes" which is the best bibliography on the American frontier that the reviewer has seen. The book has no index, but in light of its content, an index would probably have been of very little value.

It is possible that the Indian played little or no part in the development of the character traits of Americans, but if he did, *America's Frontier Heritage* sheds little light on his role.

Overall, *America's Frontier Heritage* is an excellent work that should be in most libraries and of great interest to all students and general readers who desire to know more about the origins and peculiarities of the American character.

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Abraham Lincoln: A History. By John G. Nicolay and John Hay. Abridged and edited by Paul M. Angle. [*Classic American Historians.* Edited by Paul M. Angle.] (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966. Pp. xix, 394. Notes, illustrations, bibliographical note, index. Paperbound, \$3.45; clothbound, \$8.50.)

Shortly after Lincoln's tragic assassination a torrent of biographical writing began that has not yet run its course. As of 1939 Jay Monaghan's standard *Lincoln Bibliography* listed some four thousand separate titles concerning Lincoln, not including articles. By now five thousand or more such works exist. Although the earliest of the Lincoln biographers were generally the weakest, in 1890 his two former secretaries, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, published their notable ten-volume *Abraham Lincoln, A History*. It was the result of more than twenty years of personal knowledge and careful note-taking by alert and intimate observers of Lincoln's role as president. Furthermore, Lincoln had cooperated with his secretaries in gathering relevant manuscript materials. Although Nicolay and Hay had every possible opportunity to present a biography of the "inner Lincoln," particularly in times of great national stress, they fashioned instead a conventional history of the United States from Lincoln's birth until the end of the Civil War, serialized first for *Century Magazine*. In its pages he emerged as the central figure of a "life-and-times" approach. The original volumes encompassed the major facets of Lincoln's career but did so in a conventional way, reprinting documents and letters to which Nicolay and Hay alone had access—until these manuscripts were much later made available to scholars.

Immersed as the authors were in the political atmosphere of post-Civil War Republicanism, a conservative and highly proper Lincoln, quite different from William Herndon's damaging caricature, emerged. The Nicolay and Hay work, authorized by Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, possessed both the merits and defects of an official biography. Though exhaustive, its argument was marred by party bias and was lacking in fundamental interpretive skill. Nevertheless, Nicolay and Hay's detailed volumes remain indispensable to the serious Lincoln scholar. His two secretaries were dedicated and loyal men whose exhaustive writings mirrored their close personal association with and adulation of their chief.

Abridged and edited now by Paul M. Angle, the original ten volumes are made available to modern readers in manageable form. An introduc-