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George Washington and the West

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BOOK REVIEWS

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE WEST. By Charles H. Ambler. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1936. Pp. vi, 210.

Local history becomes cosmopolitan and the trans-Allegheny region becomes the frontier of a civilization, in Dr. Ambler's latest book, *George Washington and the West*. As Washington's career in the West is unfolded, frontier outposts mark not only the advance of the adventuresome, but the march of a civilization as well, and every border clash is the impinging of one civilization — European — upon another — aborigine, and his diary becomes the minutes of their early meetings. Thus, in his excursions into the West, George Washington was not only a pioneer, but was also a part of a great cultural conflict.

Westward expansion was the order of Washington's day in colonial America, and in this, like many of his contemporaries, he was a nationalist. Within twenty years of Washington's death, Chief Justice Marshall described the territorial limits of the United States as follows: “. . . this vast republic, from the St. Croix to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific”¹

So, almost within the period of his lifetime, Washington witnessed the transition of his West from a borderland, disputed over by France and England, to a well-settled area, the winning of which was already accomplished in the minds of those who followed after him. A new West was already beckoning.

But the winning of the West, the West of George Washington, is more than the story of the acquisition of new territories. Quickly, local border troubles assumed international importance and events which originated there eventually “. . . resulted in the first American war fought for American causes. The centre of interest was now shifted to the Ohio Valley. This region the French claimed . . . and . . . they were willing to fight to maintain their claims”²

The first clashes which marked this border rivalry between the French and the English brought George Washington into prominence and his brush with Jumonville, a French commander, at Laurel Mountain, May 28, 1754, attained the status of an “incident” which Dr. Ambler characterizes as “. . . the match which

¹ *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 4 Wheat. 316, 4 L. Ed. 579 (1819). Washington died December 14, 1799.

² FISH, *AMERICAN DIPLOMACY* (1923) 16. .

all but ignited the already overstocked tinder-box of war."³ For the first time, contemporary American accounts are collated, the evidence sifted, and Dr. Ambler concludes that the juxtaposition of events justified Washington's action. The painstaking work which was necessary to assemble and mobilize these contemporary newspaper accounts, which are published in the appendix, is a tribute to Dr. Ambler's scholarship and is in itself a sufficient recommendation of the work.

The Fort Necessity clash is carefully reviewed by Dr. Ambler, and under his scholarly treatment, yields new fruits. Popularly described as a "defeat," Dr. Ambler points out that Washington, according to the terms of the capitulation, accomplish much of what he had set out to do and that his retirement was not the "rout" others have described.

The book moves along smoothly and Dr. Ambler has captured that elusive quality of making dates and places readable. Perhaps a simile may be helpful — he makes what are otherwise tedious "courses and distances," material which is akin to metes and bounds, flow evenly. The mechanics of this approach indicate a well-placed background, with Washington, the central character, emerging naturally and carrying with him the burden of the story to be told. The reader is unaware of any "hero-worship."

Complete foot-notes, an extensive bibliography which must claim the admiration of any student, a helpful appendix and index conclude the work.

—BEN IVAN MELNICOFF.

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PATENTS AND GEBRAUCHSMUSTER IN INTERNATIONAL LAW. By Emerson Stringham. Madison, Wisconsin. Pacot Publications, 1935. Pp. 447.

If one were seeking a good focal point from which he could quickly survey the temper of the prevailing economic order, he need only peer briefly into the machinations of patent law structure. He will perceive a rapid succession of scenes on the national and international stage, starting with the trade expansion period of the Industrial Revolution, and shifting temporarily through the Congresses of Vienna, Paris and Madrid to the more recent Wash-

³ AMBLER, GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE WEST (1936) 72.