

'French Pioneers'

A Book for Western New Yorkers

"Baptist minister" and "expert on the Jesuits' Iroquois missions". You would not usually expect these two terms to be applicable to one and the same man. But as many Rochesterians will remember, they both did apply to the late Dr. Alexander McGinn Stewart.

If there was one assertion that angered the mild-mannered Dr. Stewart, it was that the history of Western New York stemmed from two centers: Plymouth Rock and Nieuw Amsterdam. You can't recount our upstate history, he countered, without dealing also with the French. French explorers, French warriors, French technicians played a large part in the annals of the area. And noblest of all, the missionaries—Jesuit, Franciscan, Sulpician—to the New York State Indians of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Dr. Stewart died in 1962.

What brings him back to mind at this time is the posthumous publication of a work which he finished writing a few years before his death. The New York State Archeological Association has just issued it in paperback. "French Pioneers in the Eastern Great Lakes area, 1609-1791." This book presents in summary the result of years of study, of canoe-travel and personal exploration throughout New York and Ontario, where the exciting events it recounts took place. "French Pioneers" combines the first two segments of the work, which were published by the Archeological Association in 1958 and 1959 and are now out of print, with the final segments, now published for the first time.

The task of reading the work for the press was entrusted to an editorial board including Charles Knoll, William Cornwell, and Father Robert F. McNamara. Editor-in-chief was Father John R. Lee, CSB., of the Anthropology Department of the University of Windsor. Father Lee, in an introduction, pays an appropriate tribute to the deceased author.

"French Pioneers," abundantly annotated but written in a popular style, tells the tale of the main figures in the history of the St. Lawrence water system; from Cartier to Champlain. Champlain's incursions into New York are described; the foundation, flowering and fall of the Jesuit missions among the Hurons of Georgian Bay; the wars of the Iroquois. Then comes the rather surprising sequel of Iroquois victory: the "invasion" by Jesuit missionaries of the Iroquois homeland itself.

In the late 17th and during most of the 18th Century, France and England battled to control the Iroquois of mid- and Western New York. The French finally lost the battle when New France fell to the British in 1763. But Western New York had meanwhile been the scene of many exciting and romantic events during its "French" days.

Dr. Stewart has sowed his text liberally with fascinating glimpses of frontier figures and events. There is Chief Donnacona, whom Cartier took back to France with him in 1563, and who "married happily" and died there. There is Stephen Brule, emissary of Champlain to the Andastes, saved by a "miracle" from death by the Iroquois in 1616. There is Jean Collet, first white man to

visit Wisconsin, who dressed up as a Chinese mandarin to greet the natives, thinking he had reached China. There is the Franciscan Father Dailon, sleeping under the stars of Western New York in 1626, during the course of his visit to the Neutral Indians of the Niagara country.

There are the heroic martyred Jesuits of the Huron mission; and the scarcely less heroic "dry martyrs" of the Seneca mission—like Jacques Fremin and Julien Garnier. There is the famous stratagem used by the French colony at Onondaga to escape the hands of the Onondagas in 1658. There is the visit of LaSalle and the Sulpicians Dollier and Galinee, in 1669, and the feast of roast dog served to them by the Iroquois—a high but unpalatable delicacy. There is the punitive expedition led against the Senecas in 1687 by the Marquis de Denonville, and his almost disastrous encounter with the smaller army of redskins at Victor.

Many other names figure in the narrative; the devout Huron, Francis Tehoronhongo; the French agent to the Indians, Louis Thomas de Joncaire of Fort Niagara; his British counterpart, Sir William Johnson; Gov. Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and his spouse; Father Pierre F. X. Charlevoix, the Jesuit travel-writer; the missionary Father Picquet; the explorer Celoron; Moravian missionaries Zeisberger and Cammerhof; Mary Jemison, the "White Woman of the Genesee"; and still more.



Dr. Stewart

Dr. Stewart likewise provides his readers with five appendices. One of them deals with the trails that Indians and whites used to cross Central New York in the 16th Century—trails that we still follow today over some of our main highways.

The 122-page "French Pioneers" deserves a wide reading public in the area which it treats, for it is, apparently, the first work to survey the whole story of French-Indian-British-Dutch rivalry in Upper Ontario and Western New York. High school and grammar school libraries, in particular, should find it a valuable tool.

Copies of Alexander Stewart's last and best evidence of his scholarship are available at the offices of the New York State Archeological Association, Rochester Museum and Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester, N.Y., 14607. The price is \$2.25.

Balancing the Books

Miles Apart in Italy

By Father John S. Kennedy

In the spring of 1945, when the Allied armies were driving on northern Italy, Mussolini attempted to escape into Switzerland. Seized short of the border, he was summarily executed. He had with him treasure reputed to be worth at least \$80 million. This disappeared, and nothing is known of its disposition.

A fictional solution of the mystery is offered by A. E. Hotchner in his novel "Treasure" (Random House, \$6.95). It is not presented as factual, but is meant simply to serve as the nub of an adventure-and-suspense story.

Paul Selwyn, an American aged 44, is released from an Italian prison in 1969. He has served 20 years for a murder which he did not commit. The victim was Arnaldo Disio, an Italian who had been a fellow member of an international team which, in 1945, was trying to determine the whereabouts of Mussolini's millions.

Selwyn had been framed. But by whom? He wants to know, but much more does he want, for his own benefit, to locate at least some of the money, jewels, and documents which have never turned up.

There is a certain amount of ingenuity in Hotchner's story telling, and at times the narrative has a tingling quality. But it is encumbered with too much of the preposterous to allow the reader to hold off disbelief.

One element of the preposterous is the dependence, at several key turns in the plot, on the disclosure of the contents of a sacramental Confession. In one instance, the penitent (invariably called the confessor by Hotchner) gives leave for anonymous disclosure to the authorities. But in others, the disclosure is impermissibly made.

There is more of the preposterous in almost everything which Hotchner writes of the Church. It is not only a matter of such detail as an absurdly wrong account of the offering of Mass, but also of his whole attitude which may justly be called denigratory.

Shirley Hazard, on the other hand, although marvelously skillful, may be over-refined, on the evidence of her novel "The Bay of Noon" (Atlantic-Little, Brown, \$5.95). This, too,

has an Italian setting, the city and environs of Naples.

The narrator is Jenny Unsworth, who is recalling her experiences in Naples 15 years earlier. She had been sent there as a translator of documents at the Naples establishment of NATO.

Her early years had had a gypsy character. As a child, she had been evacuated from England during World War II, had spent some years in South Africa, some years in Somaliland, and later had returned briefly to London.

Her one anchor had been a brother. But he married a woman with whom Jenny was incompatible. "I have never spent so much time with a being who had no interest beyond herself. Norah talked a lot about human relationships, as she called them . . . but spoke of these as if they were a special subject, like lepidoptery or tropical plants, of which one could hardly hope to encounter interesting examples in daily life."

It was not only that it pained Jenny to see her gifted brother absorbed in such a sorry creature, but also there was the inescapable fact that, for Jenny, Norah was a successful rival in love.

In Naples, she knows no one and expects to become involved with no one. But she has a letter of introduction to a resident of the city, an Italian woman, a writer whose Christian name is Gioconda. She is invited to Gioconda's apartment.

A friendship quickly develops, and almost simultaneously there is the growth of another friendship with a Scottish biologist, Justin Tulloch. A web begins to be woven.

The Italian code is at first incomprehensible to Jenny, as strange and bizarre as Naples itself. But experience tutors her in the former, just as it acquaints her with something of the secret of the latter.

The manner of this happening is the burden of Miss Hazard's exquisitely written, but perhaps too elliptical, novel. In her care not to be obvious or heavy-handed, Miss Hazard is always in peril of attenuation. Her quick-glancing, ironic eye may not be matched in the reader's case.

Even so, how much better her grace than Hotchner's lumbering.

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