

BOOK REVIEWS

Alaska, A History of its Administration, Exploitation, and Industrial Development During Its First Half Century Under the Rule of the United States. By JEANETTE PADDOCK NICHOLS. (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1923. Pp. 456. \$6.00 net.)

During the past ten years many writers on Alaska have planned a complete political history of this field. In fact, the reviewer once had such a work in mind. However, one by one, these writers have given up the attempt, as too great an undertaking, and have confined their efforts to those fields of Alaska which present less difficulties.

The field of Alaskan politics is far more difficult than the casual student realizes before entering it. So far as ascertained, there exists not one respectable monograph on the entire field, if, indeed, there exists one which is not respectable. Much of the material is difficult of access, and when to be had, is almost wholly of ex parte nature. Hardly any two persons agree on anything; and inconsistency abounds everywhere. Dr. Nichols then in attempting to write a political history has had to assume the multi-fold roles of collector, compiler, evaluator and author. It is not to be presupposed that she would excel in all in the same work. The remarkable thing is that she has excelled in any.

In the first two roles Dr. Nichols has displayed rare ability as a collector and compiler of new material; and this ability is not to be met with everywhere. From this standpoint alone the work has high merit and will always find a place in the library of the Alaska scholar.

As to how well she has succeeded in evaluating and fact-grouping, that only time can disclose, for no person who has not gone over the same ground can very well set himself up as critic; at least, not over the entire field. Some day students of history will enter the Alaska political field and their researches will alone determine the merit of this work.

It is the opinion of the reviewer, from his ten years' experience in the general field of Alaska history, that the work has been done as well as any scholar in the United States, working with the same difficulties, pioneering as it were, could do it. Any defects in the work must be attributed to an attempt on the part of

the author to do too much, rather than to any lack of ability. It is the feeling of the reviewer that Dr. Nichols has attempted too much.

The first two chapters—those dealing with Alaska before the passage of the Organic act—appear to be weakest; each succeeding chapter is better, and the last chapters are best of all. In the first two chapters Dr. Nichols appears to have fallen into the prevailing error of the day—an error perpetuated by Bancroft, that Alaska was not an integral part of the United States and subject to any laws other than customs acts. The title of her second chapter is “Merely a Geographical Subdivision” and on page 40 in reciting a number of disabilities under which Alaskans labored, she includes these words “no murderer could be tried.” On page 80 she gives the impression that Alaska was not even Indian country. This does not appear to be true.

One of the first things Seward did after the purchase was to enquire of the attorney general the political status of Alaska. The attorney general replied that according to article 3 of the treaty Alaska became an integral part of the United States, subject to such general and special laws of the United States as were then in force. He stated that this question had arisen when California came into the possession of the United States and that the supreme court (16 Howard’s R, 164, 199) had acted upon it, and were Alaska’s case to be brought before the same court the same opinion would be handed down.

Alaska became, on June 20th, the date of the proclamation, an integral part of the United States; was subject to the general Indian act of 1834 (4 U. S. Stat., 729) being Indian or unorganized country; was subject to the general revenue and customs acts of the United States; and to the general laws of the United States affecting crimes, passed April 30, 1790, and subsequent dates (Revised Statutes 5339-5357.) Congress at this early date had been called upon to legislate for the high seas, arsenals, reservations, and portions of the domain without the jurisdiction of any state or territory; hence the act of 1790. Under this the great felonies, murder, attempt to commit murder or manslaughter, manslaughter, rape, maiming, bigamy, larceny, receiving stolen goods, and many lesser crimes are punishable. A number of cases arising under these acts were tried in the Oregon courts, the most notorious being *U. S. vs. John Williams* (2 Fed. Rep., 61.) Though strangely overlooked, these documents are available and

they prove that Alaska was not without the facilities for law and order from the very day it became a possession of the United States.

VICTOR J. FARRAR

Books on the Pacific Northwest for Small Libraries. By ELEANOR RUTH ROCKWOOD. (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1923. Pp. 55. 75 cents.)

As indicated by the title, this list of books on the Pacific Northwest has been prepared for the small library. It contains some 225 entries of the most useful and accessible books. Its chief value lies in the careful selection that has been made from the large number of titles in this field. It gives moreover useful annotations to all items and furnishes trade information, including an estimate of prices on the out-of-print books. Although intended primarily for the small library, it will be serviceable to all libraries and will prove to be of very great usefulness to private collectors of Pacific Northwest Americana.

The work is arranged by subject under some twenty main heads. A table of contents and an author index is furnished. It is well printed and may serve as a model for future publications of its kind. The Pacific Northwest Library Association is responsible for the publication of this admirable book list, but chief credit is due to the compiler whose bibliographic judgment is based on many years of successful work as reference librarian in the Library Association of Portland.

CHARLES W. SMITH

Nordwest Amerikanische Indianerkunst. By LEONHARD ADAM. (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, A. G. Orbis Pictus, Band 17. Pp. 44 plus 48 plates.)

Much theory has been propounded on the subject of primitive art but until there are more books like Leonhard Adam's "Indianerkunst" dealing with a specific type of art, correct generalizations are impossible. The author has described the art style of the North Pacific Coast tribes through studying the specimens at the Berlin Museum and through the use of Boas' and Swanton's accounts of the Kwakiutl and Haida. Considering that the author has had no actual contact with the people, he has caught the spirit of the work very well. The illustrations are very excellent and done with the same care that has distinguished other volumes of this series and made them so valuable as records of art.

ERNA GUNTHER