

**Americana.** *It is interesting to speculate on what lies behind the intense interest of Americans since the war in the shape, color, feel, and history of their land. Is it a search for security in the roots of our past or in a diverting regionalism—both far from the ugly world situation, from the problems of the future? Or has a victorious nation, a new world power, become suddenly aware of itself, of its strength and diversity? In any case this year has seen a flood of books on all aspects of the United States, past and present, of which the four reviewed below are typical examples. Charles Hurd's "Washington Cavalcade," incidentally, forms a fitting introduction to John Gunther's coming book on the Capital. And to supplement "The Overland Trail," see John Bakeless's magnificent "Lewis and Clark."*

## 147 Years of Capital Personalities

WASHINGTON CAVALCADE. By Charles Hurd. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1948. 320 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by ERNEST K. LINDLEY

THIS pleasant book is the second in the Society in America series. The purpose of these volumes, as defined by the publisher, is "to portray the individual characteristics, to underscore the idiosyncrasies, and to trace the growth of sectional societies with special emphasis on local traditions and on the personalities who embody them."

This is an awkward directive for a book on Washington. The striking characteristics of Washington society—with or without capitalization—are not sectional. They are not local except in the sense that they are not duplicated elsewhere. They are by-products of the fact that Washington is the seat of the national government. Such peculiarities of social custom as are to be found in Washington are related to the "protocol" of official entertainment. Most of the interesting personalities—or at least those who are also important—are transients. They have come and gone in thousands. To exclude them would be arbitrary and artificial and probably result in a book that nobody would want to read. Yet if you include them the canvas becomes national and international. The personalities and social sidelights of any one year provide enough material for several amusing books, even if the shape and meaning of larger affairs are ignored. This one volume is supposed to "cover" Washington for 147 years—the growth of the city, the development of its social characteristics, and its endless procession of personalities (underscoring idiosyncrasies).

The author, Charles Hurd, was well

chosen. He went to Washington nineteen years ago as a member of *The New York Times* Bureau. He is an able and genially sophisticated observer with an eye for detail and an ear for a juicy anecdote. He had demonstrated in his previous writings, notably his book on the White House, his diligence in ferreting interesting facts from the historical records. In this book, he undertook a mission which no one could execute. He has made the best of it, for the relaxation of the reader, by producing a savory potpourri of anecdotes, entertaining facts, and glimpses of the great, near-great, and their hangers-on, both political and social.

Mr. Hurd begins with a tongue-in-the cheek refutation of the charge that

Washington is built on a swamp. He recounts the deal between Hamilton and Jefferson which put the national capital where it is. He recalls that when the Executive branch moved into Washington it consisted of 167 persons all-told, and that the city grew at the rate of only about 1,000 a year until the Civil War. He continually summons up such significant details as that it was not until 1892 that the three "great powers"—Great Britain, France, and Germany—indicated their willingness to accord equality to the United States by exchanging ambassadors instead of ministers.

There are many feminine characters in this book—Dolly Madison, Peg O'Neale, Grover Cleveland's bride, Mrs. Galt, Evalyn Walsh MacLean, Alice Longworth, and scores of others, mostly unimportant but useful to the author's purpose in illustrating the social foibles of the capital. Among them are many hostesses. Washington has no café society, and it supports only one theatre. Dinner, luncheon, and cocktail parties are the predominant form of entertainment. But rarely, if ever, has there been a dominating salon, or even an important one. In recent years, the woman who came nearest to the goal was Mrs. J. Borden Harriman, later Minister to Norway, with her Sunday night suppers in Franklin Roosevelt's early years. These brought together leading New Dealers, Democrats, and Republicans, and after the food came informal and usually lively debates or important issues. Mr. Hurd does no mention her. And it must be admitted

**THE AUTHOR:** Charles Hurd was born in Oklahoma Indian Territory, where both his grandfathers settled when The Strip was opened. At thirteen his family moved to St. Louis "to get some sort of decent education into me." It took two years. He graduated high school in 1918, got a job as cub reporter on the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, was too enthusiastic about it to take more than extension courses at Washington University and Northwestern. In 1926, after five years with the AP in Chicago and New York, he became associate editor of *Liberty*. Three years later *The New York Times* tagged him for its Washington Bureau, where, except for a year with the London Bureau and another to set up *Newsweek's* department on post-war developments, he has remained. While White House correspondent for six years during the Roosevelt Administration, he wrote "The White House: A Biography," regarded as the authority on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. He was Mr. Ochs's veterans' editor from 1944 through '46 (when the paper "ran out of crusade"), wrote a second book, "The Veterans' Program," a monthly Washington page for *Redbook*, and innumerable articles. Marriage into an old D.C. family gave him an inside-out perspective on Capital society for "Washington Cavalcade." He's currently concentrating on economics for both *The Times* and another book, tentatively titled "U.S. Unlimited" and scheduled for autumn publication. He likes to fish and write fiction, but doesn't think much of the latter as "a stable way to eat."

R. G.



that the nice people—often widows—with money, who manage to corral important people just to drink and dine well, are more representative of the prominent unofficial hostesses.

The limited diplomatic value of formal social activities is brought out, penetratingly, by Mr. Hurd by illustrations from the year 1939. All the major embassies fell on their social faces—including the British, which was then still under the fearfully correct regime of Sir Ronald Lindsay. What tripped the British was a garden party for the King and Queen, the invitation list of which omitted many who thought they should be there and included sundry nonentities.

Mr. Hurd points, in contrast, to the "great success" of Lord Halifax, who made it his business to get acquainted with the United States and its people. He omits mention, however, of the intervening ambassador, Lord Lothian, who already knew the United States and whose informal and direct ways set the example for Halifax.

Among the comparatively recent innovations, Mr. Hurd cites the annual White House reception for the press instituted by the Franklin Roosevelts. He catalogues, with brief descriptions, some of the important public figures of the Roosevelt years and a few of those in the Truman Administration. But these are hardly more than identifications which add little or nothing to the various themes of the book. Among them, incidentally, Secretary of State Marshall is mentioned only in passing. I found myself wishing that Mr. Hurd had left them all out except as he could recall some good anecdotes about them.

The Civil War years are almost totally omitted—probably in deference to Margaret Leech. There is little about the First World War. Probably nothing is lost thereby. For Mr. Hurd unquestionably had many times the amount of material he could use in one volume.

A member of an old Washington family, writing in a privately printed booklet some years ago, is quoted approvingly by Mr. Hurd:

It has been said that in no place in the world does money count for so much or so little as in Washington. While it is true that a great statesman may find himself at a social disadvantage without adequate income, and great wealth, if united to official position, is able to attract attention and political following by lavish display and entertainment, yet, at the same time, money, unaccompanied by other advantages, is nowhere so helpless as in Washington, while talent, culture, and engaging personality are always at a high premium.

The analysis is still correct.

This book, one suspects, will be en-

joyed by a great many people in slightly differing ways. Those who know Washington the best will enjoy most the earlier sections, if only because most of the later material is already familiar to them. Those who know Washington least well probably will enjoy it all, except perhaps the brief sections, here and there, on the physical growth of the city, including the precise locations of certain buildings and houses. It is a good book to have at the side of your bed, or anywhere else you may want to find in a hurry, by starting on almost any page, agreeable reading.

## New England Exhibitor



Many of Barrows Mussey's sources are accessible only to determined people.

**YANKEE LIFE BY THOSE WHO LIVED IT.** Edited by Barrows Mussey. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1947. 550 pp. \$6.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

THE REDISCOVERY of New England, particularly by New Englanders, is one of the more agreeable phenomena of these generally disagreeable times. Mr. Mussey's contribution to this booming renaissance is worthy and competent, and makes good reading. He has drawn on the work of some fifty expert witnesses—substantial citizens, preachers, lawyers, merchants, rogues, eccentrics, schoolmasters, schoolmistresses, farmers, printers, painters, and a handful of nobodies who set down the record of crowded hours in vivid and all but vanished pamphlets. Only a few of his sources such as "The Education of Henry Adams" and "Two Years Before the Mast," are readily available; many of them are accessible only to those determined people who, like Mr. Mussey, prowl from antiquarian bookshop to historical society, from rural

library to great metropolitan repository, in quest of the record of life as it used to be lived.

Mr. Mussey has roamed and read to good purpose. His findings provide that most delightful of commentaries on the life of an earlier era: the inevitable implied comparison between other times and our own. Here is Timothy Dwight, sometime president of Yale College, reporting that "the proportion of animal food eaten in this country [i.e., New England] is excessive," and that "at entertainments, the dining-table is loaded with a much greater variety of dishes than good sense will justify." Here is Samuel Griswold Goodrich ("Peter Parley" to our great-grandparents) recalling an era when "friction matches had not been sent from the regions of brimstone, to enable every boy or beggar to carry a conflagration in his pocket." Here is Thomas Low Nichols recalling an era when "there were no landlords in this country" (he meant New Hampshire), and when "the two or three richest men in our parts were wildly reported to be worth forty or fifty thousand dollars." Here is Charles Taber Congdon of New Bedford, later right-hand-man to Horace Greeley, reliving the "melancholy evening . . . when the news came that General Jackson has been elected to the Presidency, and that John Quincy Adams was defeated. My impression is that I cried"—he was eight years old.

Although Mr. Mussey's Yankees sprawl over three centuries, the big majority of them lived into or in the nineteenth century, and a few in the twentieth. "Yankee Life," therefore, is largely a composite picture of a New England of recognizable outline and investiture, and not a conglomerate of Puritan worthies, blunderbusses, and dripping scalps.

## Anatomy of Hoosierism

**INDIANA: AN INTERPRETATION.**

By John Bartlow Martin. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1947. 300 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

WITHOUT defining his terms, the author describes this book as journalism, not history; one man's interpretation of "the Hoosier character, the Hoosier thought, and the Hoosier way of living." He may refer to its lively, bouncy style and the hundreds of tangential anecdotes; or to the easy, free-wheeling pursuit of many ideas, movements, and characters to a conclusion or end which is disillusioning or lacking in the idealism or "moral" thought necessary for school-