

BOOK REVIEWS

Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion. Edited, with an introduction, by Hunter Dickinson Farish. (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1943. Pp. xlv, 323. Eight illustrations, Appendix and Index. \$4.00.)

A fascinating picture of the "Golden Age" of Virginia that cast its light over life in the Old South for more than a century is found in the *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian*, the original manuscripts of which are now in the Library of Princeton University. This volume with its attractive foremat is the third in the Williamsburg Restoration Historical Studies, the scope of the series having been defined by the Editor, Hunter Dickinson Farish, as the history of Williamsburg, Virginia, in the eighteenth century and "the origin, development and expansion of the civilization of which this city is the center."

In the two interesting chapters of his introduction, Doctor Farish gives a general portrayal of life of the Virginia planter class and notes on the Robert "King" Carter family in the half century before the American Revolution, preparing the reader for Fithian's own first-hand account of life at Nomini Hall, written when as a young Princeton graduate, he spent a year (1773-1774) in Tidewater Virginia as the teacher of the children of Robert Carter, III.

The descriptions and narrative in the *Journal* are those of one who saw for the first time the beauty and charm of Virginia planter life. The letters reveal his intimate thoughts and his loyalty to his beloved Laura and his friends back home in New Jersey. A devout Christian preparing for the ministry, reared in the tradition of Calvinism, and firmly believing in the democratic spirit, Fithian did not fail to set forth some of the dark side and the cruelties which shadowed a feudal society in a setting that was the scene of expansive beginnings of the Industrial Age in the Western World. Yet this only heightens by contrast his gentleness and his understanding and affection for his gracious, pleasure loving friends of the southern aristocracy.

Fithian's *Journal*, with deletions, was published by the Princeton Historical Association in 1900 but has long been unavailable by the general public. The new edition published as one of the Williamsburg Studies gives for the first time additional parts of the journal and the letters that make it a valuable social and economic source on Colonial Virginia. With Doctor Farish's introduction, the book presents a real, human interest story that will be read by lovers

of American romance as well as by students and scholars in their historical research.

—Muriel H. Wright

Oklahoma Historical Society

Guadal P'a. The Journal of Lieutenant J. W. Abert, from Bent's Fort to St. Louis in 1845. Edited, with introduction and notes, by H. Bailey Carroll. (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle Historical Society, 1941. Pp. XX, 121. Portrait sketch by Harold Bugbee. Maps and Index. \$3.50.)

The important Journal written by Lieutenant James W. Abert, of the U. S. Topographical Engineers, in command of a government expedition to complete a reconnaissance of the Canadian River from Eastern New Mexico through Oklahoma in 1845, was almost overlooked by early day historians. The manuscript of this narrative in the National Archives in Washington has been brought to light and edited by H. Bailey Carroll, Professor of history in North Texas Agricultural College. Published in attractive format, the book proves that current biographical volumes in this country missed an opportunity for some colorful paragraphs in failing to list a biography of Lieutenant Abert.

The title *Guadal P'a*, explained in the Editor's introduction, is the Kiowa Indian name for the Canadian River. The term means "Red River," the name by which the Canadian River of Texas and Oklahoma has long been known in New Mexico. The selection of the name *Guadal P'a* is a deserved recognition of the Kiowa language.

The special detachment of troops assigned to the command of Lieutenant Abert by Captain John C. Fremont set forth from Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River in Colorado and proceeded over Raton Pass on the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail. Following the headwaters of the Canadian to its Grand Canyon, thence crossing the Mosquero Flats and proceeding down Ute Creek to the Canadian, this river was followed through Eastern New Mexico and across a large portion of the Texas Panhandle. In this region, the expedition veered southward to the headwaters of the North Fork of Red River and back again to the Canadian, proceeding along almost its whole course through what is now Oklahoma. In preparing his notes, Doctor Carroll traveled the entire route checking Abert's Journal every mile of the way.

The opening lines of the Journal state briefly the reason for this military reconnaissance which began at Bent's Fort in August, 1845, and ended at St. Louis in November of the same year. The countless tortuous bends of the Canadian made it difficult for the expedition to keep in sight of the river. There were times when

trails had to be cut and dug out before the loads of supplies could be kept moving forward. The Editor has pointed out that transportation was almost exclusively on mules, making it the great *mule* expedition across the plains. Perhaps, Lieutenant Abert's success was partly the means of making the mule traditional with the United States Army.

More space was given in the Journal to descriptions of places in Oklahoma than to those of any of the states through which the expedition passed. When camped within two miles of Eufaula in the Creek Nation, Lieutenant Abert recorded that his men ate bread made of cornmeal and sweet potatoes given them by an Indian resident and found it "exceedingly agreeable." The passing of two wagons was noted carrying specie which a government agent was taking across the country to pay soldiers. Traveling north from Fort Gibson, the way was seen "literally lined with the wagons of emigrants to Texas, and from this time until we arrived at St. Louis we continued daily to see hundreds of them." The interesting, narrative style proved Lieutenant Abert a keen observer, one who enjoyed the beauty of wild flowers, the sight of wild animals and birds and the natural scenes of the country during his journey through Oklahoma a century ago.

First and last in preparing his manuscript for publication, the Editor, Doctor Carroll, made a special study of southwestern explorers and trail-makers. He traveled hundreds of miles in an effort to retrace Abert's route across the Plains. He has traveled thousands of miles over other trails in the Southwest, during which he has met "many interesting and helpful people—those 'who know the land'—trail drivers, wolf hunters, naturalists, and local historians." He is co-author and author of a number of books on historical subjects in the Southwest. He is Associate Editor of the Southwestern Historical Quarterly and of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Review and Editor of the *Junior Historian*. His presentation of *Guadal P'a* will be read and re-read with lively interest for the book will be kept and enjoyed for its first-hand descriptions of Oklahoma as a part of the Great Southwest.

—Lona Shawver

Oklahoma City