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Review of Hurrah for My New Country!

Darlene Ritter

Midland Lutheran College

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Hurrah for My New Country! By Leon Charles Fouquet. Edited and compiled by Rosalie Fouquet Davis and Mathilde Fouquet Rugles. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. Foreword, preface, illustrations, epilogue, appendices, notes, index. xxiv + 212 pp. \$24.95.

The best summary of the scope of the book is found in the foreword. Leon Fouquet as an immigrant helped settle two states—Kansas and Oklahoma. “Fouquet believed he was seeing a transplanted revolution—an appraisal of some merit—in this new country, which to him was very strange, wild, beautiful, and offered him unbelievable opportunities” (p. xxvii). Read the book with this in mind and appreciate the efforts of the family in presenting in a readable form the information preserved in journals, scrapbooks, and letters.

This personal account of the experiences of a French immigrant includes his reasons for leaving his homeland at age eighteen, his struggles for financial success, and his marriage and family life. The detailed accounts of each change of location in Kansas slow a reader in the beginning, but the lively descriptions of Fouquet’s personal experiences make the reading worthwhile.

Fouquet described his sixteen days at sea from Liverpool to New York as a nightmare. His arrival in New York on 15 June 1868 began his experience of confusion and rudeness that continued during his train trip to Leavenworth, Kansas. His plan to live with his aunt and uncle lasted a few months. Then he was on his own.

The young entrepreneur ran a ferry boat, staked a claim to land, sold vegetables. He experienced crickets eating his pants, cowboys shooting over his head, and quicksand almost killing his mules. He seriously considered returning to France but stayed and worked for the railroad as a cook.

Of course, he met Indians. His attitudes range from biased to sympathetic. He tried to chase

Indian women away by putting toads in drinking water. But he also wrote of the disappearance of the buffalo: "It takes white men to be destructive." He includes the words of a scout: "They don't like white men to kill for the pleasure of killing. We are wholesale wasters. Just stop and realize how fast the millions of buffalo are disappearing just on account of paleface recklessness" (p. 79). Later, Fouquet tried to enlist to fight the Indians, but was not called out. He writes, "Then I gave up hopes of becoming either a live or dead hero" (p. 91). Later in life he had Indian friends and neighbors.

After a disappointing return to France, Fouquet returned to the United States and married. The rest of the book describes the birth of their children, the deaths of three infant girls, and his continuing search for financial success. Again, he writes of a variety of jobs, but the most interesting is his tent store on the Cherokee Run. He shares the excitement, the cheating, and the fights with the reader.

Finally Fouquet found his place. He bought land in the Oklahoma Territory and established Dreamland Fruit Farm. He tells of his family's development of the farm. He and his wife celebrated fifty years of marriage with their twelve children and many friends. The value of the fruit and land had gone up and down, but it was a sort of paradise for the family and their friends. Then the farm that was worth \$25,000 in its prime was sold at auction, leaving them \$324.87. He and his family moved to Chandler and made their way during the Depression the best they could until his wife died in 1933 and he died in 1936.

Leon Fouquet's life is one to celebrate. As he announced at his fiftieth anniversary, he did not succeed financially, but his crowning glory was his wife and family. "And I say, 'Hooray for the U.S.A.!!'" We do need to remember these immigrants.

DARLENE RITTER
Department of English
Midland Lutheran College