



Clarion Review

General

Samuele Man With Many Names

Carol March McLernon

Oxen Books

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Three Stars (out of Five)

In the early days of America young Father Samuele Mazzuchelli left his native Italy. He came to America to preach to teach and to build churches throughout the wilderness of the Northwest Territory for settlers and Native Americans alike. This book relates some of his adventures in a very basic way for children. McLernon has chosen a good subject since the young Father Mazzuchelli was truly a man of many names much courage determination and talents.

McLernon a teacher has taken various events from the real Mazzuchelli's life and woven them together playing on the priest's long name (Carlo Gaetano Samuele Mazzuchelli) as well as his habit of referring to himself in the third person never as "I" or "me." Each chapter relates an incident from Mazzuchelli's journeys or his work as a priest and is followed by a brief "letter" to his sister Josephina back in Italy.

There is a lot to interest children in this book. From paddling a leaking canoe to church-building feats of wonder Mazzuchelli lived a varied life. His encounters with Native Americans settlers trappers and miners as well as his sojourns in the wilderness should stimulate children's interest in learning more about early America. His constant use of other terms to refer to himself also offers a bit of wordplay capped by his alter ego "Father Kelly" — Mazzuchelli became known as "Matthew Kelly" to Irish miners during his travels and was called "Father Kelly" by many afterwards. This bit of punning humor will appeal to children's love of jokes.

The book does have its faults. While the sentences are short as befits a children's book they are also choppy and sometimes seem put together arbitrarily as in Chapter 10 when Samuele faced with separation from his friends is sent back to Prairie du Chien for a new assignment: "Samuel was excited by the possibility of a new job. He didn't want to leave Pierre and his red-skinned friends." Transitions such as this offer non sequiturs. There are also other areas that could have been better developed such as Chapter 3 "Animal Lover" in which

Samuele talks about his love for animals and yet several animals from snakes to deer are killed in his presence without any apparent sorrow on Samuele's part for these creatures. These mixed messages are confusing to children and need more explanation. There are also inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation and in the form of Samuele's name which is variously spelled Samuele and Samuel.

Children should find the book interesting as they learn about the many names and guises of Father Mazzuchelli.