

Cody's optimism. Despite financial losses in the Wild West's first year, he believed that "the profit came to me in the way of valuable experience and I was in no wise discouraged." Instead, he was "determined to win success with my prairie Wild West Show or go down in complete failure" (*Wild West*, 5). He found an experienced theatrical manager in Nate Salsbury, hired John M. Burke to handle public relations, and gathered his performers, including the "the world famous Chief Sitting Bull" (*Wild West*, 10). He also brought his props: a stagecoach, teepees, and herds of horses, elk, and bison. It proved "too colossal to take to Windsor, and so the Queen came to the Wild West" (*Wild West*, 74). In *Buffalo Bill from Prairie to Palace*, Burke reuses Cody's format for *The Wild West in England* but adds his own flair. He also inserts letters from army officers to underscore the authenticity of Cody and his show. "Men who have criticised Buffalo Bill as an actor," wrote Burke, "forget wholly that he is the only man who is *playing himself*. He plays his part as he knows it, as he has acted it upon many a field" (*Prairie to Palace*, 203-4).

Together, these books tell us much about Cody's life, his showmanship, and his complex narrative. He is not an easy subject; the editors have much to clarify and do an admirable job. They include thoughtful introductions as well as photographs and illustrations that display Cody's self-promotion. They also provide notes, although those for the autobiography are less helpful than they might be. Famous names get attention while many others are unfortunately left unidentified. Overall, however, these books offer readers a fresh look at Cody and his famous self, Buffalo Bill.

Corn Palaces and Butter Queens: A History of Crop Art and Dairy Sculpture, by Pamela H. Simpson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. xx, 248 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 paper.

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It would be easy to poke fun at kitschy works of art created from grains, vegetables, and butter, but Pamela H. Simpson's well-crafted book persuasively makes the case that crop art offers a vivid source for understanding the history of fairs and agriculture. In *Corn Palaces and Butter Queens*, Simpson recounts the neglected history of food art and reveals how mosaics pieced together from grain and statues sculpted from butter speak to the larger history of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. Corn palaces are not found in text-

books on architectural history, and butter sculptures are not preserved in museums, but Simpson's history uses crop art to offer a perceptive analysis of the history of the Midwest and the boundary between fine art and crafts.

In the late nineteenth century, midwesterners anointed their own royalty, crowning King Corn and building palaces to display their agricultural bounty. The corn palace at Sioux City, Iowa, built in 1887, attracted publicity and visitors and launched a vogue for palaces decorated with grain. Residents of Sioux City erected a new palace each year from 1887 to 1891, but decided not to build the palace after the city was inundated by a flood in 1892. Boosters in Mitchell, South Dakota, seized the opportunity to build their own corn palace, one destined to become *the* corn palace. As Simpson notes, boosterism fueled the construction of grain palaces, as cities and states vied with one another for publicity and prosperity. The success of the Mitchell corn palace inspired boosters in other towns to build the Creston blue grass palace, Algona hay palace, and Forest City flax palace to promote their crops and their communities.

Many states also featured food art in their exhibits at the world's fairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. State exhibits did not simply promote agricultural abundance, but were literally made from it. Models of the California state capitol built from almonds or the Liberty Bell made from California oranges delighted fairgoers both as works of art and as testaments to agricultural abundance. Iowa's exhibits at world's fairs were temples of grain, painstakingly constructed from cornstalks and thousands of kernels of the state's staple crop.

At the same moment that grain art became popular, butter sculpture became a staple of state fairs in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other states. While some sculptors created busts of mythological figures or Theodore Roosevelt, butter cows soon became an icon of the dairy industry and one of the most famous exhibits at the fair. As Simpson notes, the butter cow became the emblem of the dairy industry at a moment when dairy farming was being remade by mechanization and the growth of corporations, and dairy corporations often sponsored butter sculpture in order to promote their products.

Ah, yes, but is it art? Some butter sculptors, such as Caroline S. Brooks, became successful artists and sculpted in marble, but butter sculpture was usually disparaged by art connoisseurs. In an era when midwesterners strove to demonstrate that their region's agricultural bounty could lay the basis for real artistic achievement, critics disparaged butter sculpture as a novelty, but this vernacular art proved pop-

ular with fairgoers, and remains a must-see icon at many state fairs today.

Why create art from food, instead of applying oil to canvas or sculpting marble or bronze? Simpson rightly characterizes corn palaces, grain art, and butter sculptures as “icons of abundance” (xvi, 111, 181, 190, 195) that tangibly displayed the Midwest’s agricultural prosperity. As she observes, using food to create art was downright wasteful—and thus attested to the Midwest’s status as America’s breadbasket, capable of producing bin-busting harvests.

Simpson also acknowledges that midwestern boosterism concealed some misgivings. In an era when agriculture was being transformed by technological and economic change, icons such as King Corn, grain murals, and butter cows harked back to a Jeffersonian ideal that was rapidly vanishing. Perhaps a bit more attention to this nostalgic yearning for a vanishing world would balance the boosters’ irrepressible optimism that predominates in Simpson’s account.

Corn Palaces and Butter Queens succeeds in recovering the history of neglected art forms and rescuing grain palaces and butter cows from what historian E. P. Thompson called “the condescension of posterity.” Grain murals and butter sculpture are not mere curiosities. Treated seriously by an accomplished art historian, corn palaces and butter cows really do offer “a broad and unique index to the ideas and attitudes” of the turn-of-the-century Midwest (xv).

Defining Deviance: Sex, Science, and Delinquent Girls, 1890–1960, by Michael A. Rembis. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. x, 227 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

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Defining Deviance examines the records of the Illinois Reformatory for Girls in Geneva, focusing on the persistent inequitable treatment of girls in the juvenile justice system over the 70 years from 1890 to 1960. Girls were most frequently brought to court for sexual misbehavior, a charge rarely made against boys. And although there were many fewer girls in the system, they were incarcerated at much higher rates than boys. Even when accused of rape, boys were less likely to be incarcerated than girls for much less serious charges. Girls modern readers would unequivocally classify as victims—those who suffered incest, rape, or other forms of abuse—were incarcerated and subject to all the rigors of reformatory treatment.