

commercial hybrids and fertilizers that immensely expanded crop yields. These developments are coupled to changing designs in corn cribs—pioneer log and split-rail varieties, then keystone or V-shaped structures, and later wood octagonal, wire mesh, wood double crib, and concrete and clay tile versions among other manufactured designs. Field shelling by combine has since forced cribs for storing ear corn into rapid obsolescence, replaced by shelled corn bins and grain handling complexes, but corn cribs still remain a commonly seen feature of farmsteads.

Richly illustrated and well written, Roe's balanced treatment will bring readers to a new awareness and appreciation for what a plain structure like the corncrib can impart of the history of farms as one passes them by on the road. I did find myself wanting to know more about those who promoted particular corn crib designs—individual manufacturers and trade organizations such as the Portland Cement Association—and of the influence that agricultural experiment stations and the Midwest Plan Service exercised over what types of cribs proliferated across Iowa. The absence of footnotes acknowledging sources of specific information and concepts is also unfortunate, but these minor quibbles aside, the book stands with T. Lindsay Baker's *Field Guide to American Windmills* as an outstanding recent contribution on the historical development of rural structures.

From where might more such historically based studies be expected? We cannot count on them from historians in the academy, where the subject of rural buildings has yet to find a respectable home outside the discipline of folklore. Nor will they likely emanate from state historic preservation offices, which largely rely on existing knowledge, set their research plow to a shallow depth, publish rarely, and emphasize short-term over long-term projects. Rather, historical knowledge will likely be enlarged by the few individuals, like Keith Roe, who become interested in one or another rural structure and then make of it a research labor of love.

DES MOINES, IOWA

LOWELL J. SOIKE

Remaining Faithful: Amana Folk Art in Transition, by Steven Ohrn. Des Moines: Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, 1988. 56 pp. Illustrations, bibliography.

This thin volume introduces the traditional Amana arts experiencing a revival: quilting, basket weaving, tinsmithing, carpet weaving, throw rugs, handwork (embroidery, crochet, and knitting), and woodwork-

itage Society to collect examples of the colonies' material culture, these arts have experienced a revival which has expanded to include sympathetic outsiders assisting in a host of strategies of which this book is one. Ohrn was Iowa's folklorist or official state agent for the preservation of the state's traditional culture when he researched this book. *Remaining Faithful* announces its conservative mission in its title at the same time as its innovative means confirms Ohrn's grasp of the colonies' survival by habitual adaptation to outside influences—the essential Amana trait that consistently lures scholars and tourists alike.

Ohrn's work is a sampler, like his previous writings on Iowa's folk art. This sampler does not include all the Amana arts; oil painting, done since the Great Change in 1932, is not covered. Ohrn did not intend to catalog all the revival artisans and all their artifacts. He does explain how each of the revival artisans included became interested in their art; and in the connoisseur's manner he gives for each illustrated artifact the name of its creator and his or her birth and death date; and he attributes a period of creation unless an exact year is confirmed. As a result, the artifact and its artisan are highlighted. Out of keeping with the latest folkloristic procedure, neither the artifacts' manner of creation nor their uses are described.

This is a fine sampler though. Since it evolved as a companion to an exhibit, it understandably reads much like that medium, an effective way of introducing material for serious contemplation but in a popular fashion. Images, colors, and layout arrest the viewer's attention by displaying the artifacts especially and the artisans secondarily in attractive ways. A minimum of text engages the reader's conscious thought. The cover itself, a color photograph of a contemporary wedding cake mold which is juxtaposed with another photograph like a panel on the title-facing page showing a similar mold at least sixty years older, functions like an exhibit panel. As the viewer's eyes trace the details of each artifact, the viewer's mind is impressed with the molds' subtle differences but essential likeness. This visually stimulated interplay sets the stage for the book's intellectual premise stated on the intervening page, namely, that Amana's contemporary arts are a revival of their past, not a departure from it. The first chapter's text, by far the longest in the book, verbalizes the character of Amana's arts. Alternating color and black-and-white photographs beside the text have legends like exhibit labels in their length. Each of the succeeding chapters on one of the arts comprises more photographs as panels than written text. Pithy quotations from Amanans confirm major points throughout. Ohrn's preference for posed photographs of the artisans and the still life quality of the artifacts usually devoid of people direct attention to ordinary people and things that might be overlooked in

more candid views. Yet the exquisite reproduction of these photographic images makes their subjects come alive.

Ohrn's conclusion with a "further reading" list is appropriate to his brief foregoing introduction. Its effectiveness will engender a deeper appreciation and perhaps a more thorough study of Amana's folk art.

ILLINOIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION AGENCY

KEITH A. SCULLE

American from Sweden: The Story of A. V. Swanson, by Betty Swanson Cain. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987. ix, 99 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. \$15.95 cloth.

Betty Swanson Cain entitled her affectionate biography of her father's life *American from Sweden: The Story of A. V. Swanson* because to all who knew him "he seemed to be from the first the most American of Americans." Cain's account of her father's life is a reminder of the diversity of the immigrant experience in America. While many historians question assimilationist interpretations, Cain marvels at the "ease of my father's assimilation." He neither suffered the agony of a divided loyalty nor did he feel compelled to "keep two cultures in balance." Instead, as told by Cain, her father's life is a breezy success story, an immigrant Horatio Alger who seemed to have been born American.

The son of a poor hardworking coal miner, Axel Victor Svensson emigrated from Sweden in 1911 at the age of twenty. Upon his arrival he exchanged his old country name for A. V. Swanson, a change that anticipated a rapid abandonment of whatever cultural baggage he may have carried. Soon he spoke English with scarcely a trace of an accent and married an American woman. While most immigrants of Swanson's background remained workers, Swanson rapidly entered the ranks of the managerial middle class, embracing both that group's values and life-style. By 1925 he had found his niche as the manager of the J. C. Penney Company store in the college town of Ames, Iowa. He bought "the best built house" in Ames, counted himself among anyone who was anyone in Ames "high society," became a model manager-booster and a staunch Republican who enthusiastically entered into a social life of cookouts, country club, golf, and bridge. Immigrants who achieved middle-class status often did so within an ethnic community, but though Swanson was an active booster and joiner, he never belonged to any Swedish-American organizations. He rejected all religious affiliation for a "middle-class American creed of hard work, honesty, sexual purity, cleanliness, and economic independence (especially important)." High public service came when the local country

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