

*Building Community, Keeping the Faith: German Catholic Vernacular Architecture in a Rural Minnesota Parish*, by Fred W. Peterson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998. x, 196 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PATRICIA ECKHARDT, IOWA CITY

Fred W. Peterson tells us the story of the German Catholic Parish of St. John the Baptist in central Minnesota through its architecture. The structures are specific to this community, and their appearance is the result of their builder's ethnic roots joined to new circumstances. Peterson's multilayered approach to understanding the history of the parish begins with his examination of its collection of distinctive brick houses constructed over a period of 30 years. Along the way, he examines the social and economic life of this German Catholic community and its devotion to the church. Even the economic choice of many of the farmers of the parish to become dairy farmers has its consequences for individual farm families and the economic success of the community as a whole.

Peterson's starting point and subject is the collection of brick farmhouses themselves. He facilitates our understanding by presenting a few houses in detail, examining their plans and construction, farmyard environments, and the lives of their owners and builders. The houses are not isolated architectural examples, but fit into a pattern that derives from the community's German folk culture recreated on the Minnesota prairie. The book's many illustrations make it easier to envision the houses and other structures. There are house plans and farmstead layouts as well as excellent photographs of the houses and their owners.

The book presents the history of the Parish of St. John the Baptist as a complicated weaving of ethnic traditions, technology, and New World practicality. Peterson states in his introduction that he intends each chapter to add a layer of meaning to our understanding of the architecture. In chapter one we are introduced by name to the German settlers of the parish and learn of their struggles to settle the land and become prosperous. Chapter two provides an overview of the houses and the churches built from the beginning of settlement to 1930. Peterson includes log houses and previous churches as well as the present houses. This chapter includes an enlightening discussion of northeastern German vernacular houses compared to those constructed in the Parish of St. John the Baptist. Peterson illustrates and explains the traditional Niedersachsen spatial template employed for these American houses, each with its Wohnküche/Flurküche or

working kitchen/entrance. These all-important kitchens function as farm work sites just as they did in the Old World, suggesting continuity in the vernacular/folk culture of the German settlers of the parish. Chapter three presents a history of the brick industry in the parish. The efforts of brothers Herman and Joseph Imdieke to create good bricks made the construction of the houses possible. Chapter four analyzes the houses in their farm settings, and chapter five describes a representative sample in detail. Chapter six presents a look at the Parish of St. John the Baptist as a community, a fusion of religion, farm, and family colored by ethnic tradition and a common American experience. The final chapter provides a look at the unique architectural achievement of the Parish of St. John the Baptist within the context of the broader American culture.

*Building Community, Keeping the Faith* is a thorough case study of a community and its architecture, but Peterson's insights have further application as well. By providing a superior example of a case study and by setting a high standard for scholars to follow, this examination benefits all who study vernacular and ethnic architecture. Peterson explains his methodology carefully and shows by example how to go about studying such a group of buildings. He examines tradition, opportunity, and individuality as mechanisms that produced a local style of building. His interpretation of his data provides more general insights as well. His examination and description of the Parish of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and his interpretation of the communal aspects and the attitudes of this group of German settlers can be used as a reference when examining similar groups of settlers elsewhere. I now look at the German Catholic communities of Dyersville, New Vienna, and many others throughout Iowa in a different light. This book is not only a pleasure to read due to its clear and graceful text, but it provides insights Iowans can apply to themselves.

*Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland*, by Steven D. Hoelscher. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. xix, 327 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, index. \$57.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY DAVID R. MCMAHON, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Ethnic heritage tourism is big business in Iowa. Communities with ethnic ties such as Decorah and Pella—each boasts its own museum, festival, and distinctive landscape—are among Iowa's most popular tourist destinations. The increasing importance of ethnic heritage tour-

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