

done by 1900. Vennum's emphasis, however, is on the later effect of commercialization introduced by non-Indians. By mid-century, harvesting shortcuts had developed as a commercial orientation replaced subsistence uses of wild rice. Then in the 1970s paddy cultivation by non-Indians, largely in California, economically marginalized Indian production.

In a brief chapter, Vennum discusses legal issues in wild rice harvesting. Controversial federal court decisions have recently protected Ojibway off-reservation fishing, hunting, and gathering rights. Indian wild rice harvesting has not yet received much public attention, perhaps due in part to its limited economic significance, in contrast to the alleged impact of Indian spear-fishing on tourism. Although Vennum does not speculate, there may be a silver lining here for Indians: by reducing chances for Indians to use wild rice as a cash crop, commercialized harvesting by non-Indians, resulting from its belated adoption into the Euro-American diet, may contribute to a reemphasis among Indians on wild rice's cultural significance.

Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change, by Sally McMurry. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. ix, 261 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JULIE ROY JEFFREY, GOUCHER COLLEGE

Professor Sally McMurry notes in her preface that her interest in the social context of design dates back to her days as a student intern when she discovered that stylistic and technical descriptions failed to capture the full meaning of architecture. Her early insight eventually led to this valuable study of northern families and their farmhouses in the nineteenth century. McMurry's lavishly illustrated book does provide ample detail on the character of rural vernacular architecture between 1830 and 1900. But McMurry has done far more than describe rural buildings. She carefully analyzed both the social and cultural forces influencing rural designers and the values and needs that those planners brought to the design process.

While much scholarly attention has focused on the relationship of urban and suburban notions of domestic life to architecture, McMurry shows that nineteenth-century rural Americans were also engaged in working out new social and architectural understandings of changing family roles. She concentrates on a group of prosperous northern farming families who, she argues, acted as cultural mediators for their communities. Convinced of the need to make farming

responsive to capitalism and a market economy, eager to utilize machinery and to refashion agricultural life, these "progressive" farmers "literally reshaped . . . domestic landscapes" (3) in twenty-two states stretching from the East Coast to the Great Plains. The farmhouses they built and the hundreds of house designs they submitted to agricultural journals drew upon well-known vernacular forms, pattern book plans, and the work of Andrew Jackson Downing. But because the farmer designers and their wives were determined to create living arrangements suited to changing rural conditions, they were not afraid to innovate and experiment, particularly with the interiors of their houses.

McMurry's analysis of plans published in eleven influential agricultural journals between 1830 and 1900 suggests that rural designers developed three solutions for the northern farmhouse during the nineteenth century. From 1830 to 1855, progressive farmers and their wives viewed farming as a cooperative business venture. Because farming wives had significant economic responsibilities like making butter and cheese, planners arranged domestic spaces to facilitate women's work. The interior arrangements of kitchens and the careful placement of auxiliary spaces like the dairy and woodhouse revealed an interest in efficiency and saving women's labor. The kitchen's location at the rear of the farmhouse overlooking the farmyard suggested the interdependence of the farming family and the overlapping nature of female and male responsibilities. This "progressive farmhouse ideal," McMurry points out, "was as much representative of its time as the urban or suburban model of the home as asylum; it represented a rural version of American domesticity" (78).

By mid-century, the changing social and economic context of northern agriculture created new understandings of rural domesticity and the farm household. Cheese and butter factories robbed women of traditional productive work while specialized truck farming and fruit growing operations diminished the importance of female labor in the garden and orchard. As the "de-feminization" (95) of agriculture proceeded and women lost their economic importance, farmers' wives, like their urban and suburban counterparts, adopted the role of family nurturer. Childrearing assumed a new importance, and nurseries began to appear in farmhouse plans. At the same time, however, heated discussions about female drudgery appeared. As McMurry shows, the complaints about women's work stemmed from the glaring contrast between the mechanized character of outdoor operations and the manual nature of female indoor work as well as the spread of urban middle-class housekeeping standards.

Between 1855 and 1885, farmhouse designers responded to these complex changes in a variety of ways. They planned small efficient kitchens and experimented with housing arrangements for the hired hands in hopes of conserving women's energy and protecting their health. They tried out new locations for the kitchen to provide women with cheerful views and pleasant sunny workspaces. This relocation, which McMurry considers "an important reorientation . . . of northern farm life" (123), signified a division of labor and expectations that "more closely approached that of urban middle-class families" (128).

By the last decades of the century, the old cooperative ideal and the spatial arrangements that reflected it had disappeared. Efforts were made to separate out work from family life and to sort out family members by age and sex. The new interest in setting aside special spaces first for younger and then for older children reflected smaller families, more complex notions of childhood and adolescence, and the diminishing importance of children's work. Although the new arrangements came closer to those of the suburban or urban home, farm designers were also responding to the realities of migration from country to city. By providing children with individual bedrooms, they hoped to stem that migration and to increase loyalty to farm life.

Although McMurry shows that the differences between rural and urban and suburban housing diminished as the nineteenth century wore on, she emphasizes the creative independence of rural designers. Farmers and their wives, for example, vigorously debated the appropriateness of the formal parlor for rural family life. Believing the urban parlor economically wasteful and inimical to family unity, rural house planners experimented with its placement and in many cases eliminated it altogether. In the parlor's place, they introduced the family sitting room, an area to be used by the entire family and casual guests. It may be, as McMurry suggests, that this concept of an informal family space influenced mainstream American house design, which, by 1920, had abandoned the formal parlor for the less formal living room.

McMurry's study convincingly demonstrates that, like their urban and suburban counterparts, prosperous rural farmers were reformulating ideas about family and domestic spaces as the economic, cultural, and social landscape changed during the nineteenth century. Her analysis shows clearly how and why farmhouses built by well-to-do northern farmers changed. But she does not provide enough evidence to support her claim that progressive farmers were cultural mediators. One wishes she had tried to assess whether

farmers of modest means actually adopted or adapted progressive domestic solutions. Furthermore, she only rarely is able to reveal what was really "going on behind these farmhouse facades" (7). As McMurry realizes, plans can be deceiving. People may live quite differently in their houses than a study of plans would suggest. Perhaps McMurry did not have the kinds of sources that would allow her to explore the relationship between designated room use and actual use. Her inability or failure to discuss use, however, makes her book less different from those analyzing "how a pattern-book author thought families would use his designs" (vii) than she would wish. Despite these problems, McMurry's work is provocative and should interest those who study rural life and culture in Iowa and other northern states.

Common Houses in America's Small Towns: The Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi Valley, by John A. Jakle, Robert W. Bastian, and Douglas K. Meyer. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989. x, 238 pp. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index, tables, graphs. \$50.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY ALLEN G. NOBLE, UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

Common Houses in America's Small Towns is likely to make a contribution to material culture studies, but not probably in the way the authors intended. The most useful feature of the book is the large number of maps, which provide opportunities for a very generalized analysis of the distribution of certain types of houses across the eastern United States. On the other hand, the book desperately needed a critical editor to force the authors to examine more rigorously their basic theses, to question their choices of examples, to review their often unfortunate choice of terminology and nomenclature, and to restrict their tendency to offer unsubstantiated rationale as fact. To illustrate the latter point, the authors indicate (p. 80) the occurrence of the shed roof to be an English colonial adaptation to subtropical climate, but offer no evidence. Also, the idea that the frequent occurrence in the North of "tall roomy houses reflects an earlier era of affluence and social pretentiousness" is offered (p. 78) with no supporting evidence. These two examples illustrate the intuitive writing style that characterizes much of the book.

Nowhere are the defects of imprecise writing more evident than in the second chapter, which is devoted to the towns (including Grundy Center, Iowa) whose housing is chosen for analysis. The

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