

Book Notices

The Checkered Years: A Bonanza Farm Diary, 1884-1888, edited by Mary Boynton Cowdry, introduction by Elizabeth Jameson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989. xxxvii, 265 pp. Illustrations, map. \$8.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY SARA BROOKS SUNDBERG, TULANE UNIVERSITY

The Checkered Years: A Bonanza Farm Diary, 1884-88 is the daily, first-hand account of a widow who, along with three of her grown children, lived and worked on a fifteen-hundred-acre commercial wheat farm in Dakota Territory, near present-day Fargo, North Dakota. Mary Dodge Woodward's diary entries reveal daily work routines within seasonal changes on the farm, her impressions of the landscape, weather, and neighbors around her, and strong family relationships.

First published in 1937, Mary Dodge Woodward's diary is uncommon in the literature of western women's history because her experience was uncommon. Bonanza wheat farms in the Red River valley made up an unusual chapter in the history of the agricultural frontier of the Midwest. Mary Dodge Woodward's diary provides valuable information concerning women's roles and activities within the rhythms of farm life in such settings. Moreover, as historian Elizabeth Jameson's new introduction explains, Woodward came west not for land or out of curiosity, but as a widow who accompanied her children. This new edition of Mary Dodge Woodward's diary restores to view an important dimension of western women's experience.

Louis Sullivan: The Public Papers, edited by Robert Twombly. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. xxii, 257 pp. Bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PATRICIA ECKHARDT, IOWA CITY

Louis Sullivan, one of America's most influential architects, was a writer and theorist as well. *The Public Papers* assembles all of his essays, speeches and talks, committee reports, letters to the editor,

and interviews. Robert Twombly's introduction provides an excellent summary of Sullivan's intellectual and philosophical development. Each of the fifty-one "papers," presented in chronological order, are preceded by notes that set the individual piece within the context of Sullivan's life and times.

The Public Papers reveal Sullivan as both the expert architect and the poet. When he writes about technical or professional matters he is clear, concise, and informative. His more philosophical writings are also clearly written, but the subject matter is more difficult and esoteric. Reading these elusive and emotional poetical essays is rewarding for those interested in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architecture and artistic theory, for they reveal Sullivan's personal version of late Victorian transcendental thought.

Sullivan's concern focused on the creation of a uniquely American architecture. He believed that fine architecture did not occur arbitrarily, but that it could only be produced by fine men in a fine culture in harmony with the complex and dynamic structure of nature. Nature was to him the source and the model for life and whatever man could develop that was beautiful and functional. Sullivan's papers reveal an artist of sensitivity and intellect who struggled to express the structure and emotion of nature through his architecture.

America's Farm Crisis, by Carol Gorman. New York: Franklin Watts, 1987. 125 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$12.90 cloth.

REVIEWED BY EARL M. ROGERS, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The farm crisis of the 1980s affected Iowa severely. Carol Gorman, a Cedar Rapids teacher and author of several books for young adults, discusses its background and impact. The experiences of two teenage Iowa girls are told briefly to show the stress on their families.

The author devotes much space to background, concentrating on farm program details. Gorman refers to the world food shortages of the early seventies, which helped bring on the boom and bust cycle, but she fails to clarify the immediate background of the farm crisis. The federal income tax cut of 1981, followed by a spectacular increase in the deficit financed by overseas borrowing, caused the strong dollar that overpriced farm exports. Commodity and farmland prices collapsed, leaving many farmers unable to repay debts contracted in the seventies. Agricultural economists and rural sociologists, including those at Iowa State University, journalists, and farm

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