

The photographs reveal how time and the forces of change have taken their toll on the ethnic architecture of southern Illinois.

In fact, although the extremely limited amount of text serves its purpose, the photographs carry the main body of information. They emphasize geography. Landscapes and street scenes initiate the settings for the individual buildings. Then, as the introduction promises, the scope widens: drawings, old photographs, and paintings all illustrate the ethnic legacy. A variety of subjects keeps the progression from being repetitive. The residences—forty-nine altogether—are, as one would expect, designated by type and, in the later chapters, by style. Some are deserted, leaving a fragile but still useful example—often only a picturesque ruin. In addition to these dwellings, there are eighteen commercial structures, thirteen churches (for which there are two interior photographs), five log structures (three houses and two barns), and one grape arbor. Other traditional structures are a summer kitchen, a cellar, a spring house, a former inn, a stone silo, and an outdoor oven. The photographs reveal in detail methods of framing and chinking, four different kinds of log-notching, French vertical log placement, and the use of field stones. Other rarities illustrated are hand-carved tombstones and a 1798 inscribed stone mantle, now incorporated into a barn foundation. Also included in the 149 photographs are eight tombstones, a union hall, a ballroom, a roadhouse, and a bar that is still in use. Tindall's photographs are not always as striking as some would like, but they do serve to shape the book, as they must have shaped the exhibit.

The book was intended, as the authors say, "not [as] the final chapter on the vernacular architecture of ethnic groups in southern Illinois, but only the opening paragraph." The authors may be too modest. The book and the entire project are far from ordinary, if only because its authors attempted to cover one-third of a large state. If the book does not pretend to be definitive, it does offer a direction for other midwestern states to follow.

*The Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation: Historical Archaeology in the South Carolina Piedmont*, by Charles E. Orser, Jr. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988. xvii, 322 pp. Illustrations, graphs, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY RONALD L. F. DAVIS, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Charles Orser, Jr., has two goals for his study. First, as a historical archeologist, he wishes to make the research findings of his discipline

intelligible to historians. Second, and perhaps more important, he wishes to study the full material culture of the Millwood Plantation, located on the Georgia and South Carolina border, before its inundation by the waters of the Richard B. Russell Reservoir in the mid-1980s.

With these goals in mind, Orser devotes more than one hundred pages to a fascinating discussion of the state of scholarship on the archeology of southern plantations and the history of southern tenancy in general as well as that specifically on the material basis of plantation tenancy in the southern piedmont. Then he turns his attention to an examination of the Millwood Plantation, using traditional historical sources to tell the story of how it evolved from an antebellum slave plantation through a period as a squad-run sharecropping plantation in the New South era to the "standing renters" tenant plantation of the first third of the twentieth century. In the last part of the book he examines and discusses the physical effects remaining at Millwood just prior to its inundation.

Overall, this is an important book that leaves the reader wanting to know more, but a disappointing one because more is not forthcoming. Historians will seldom find a more intelligent discussion of the historical scholarship on southern tenancy. In a few chapters Orser takes the reader through much of the controversial literature on the history, economics, and sociology of tenancy as a backdrop for understanding what went on at Millwood. And his introduction to historical archeology—the human physical environment as it was shaped according to the dictates of culture—is insightful and convincing, including a statement on the material basis of civilization that is as profound a comment on the relevance of Marxian analysis in history (in contradistinction to Marxist analysis) as one can read in a few sentences.

But all of this is background for an analysis of the remnants of the human experience at Millwood for more than a hundred years: its material culture as identified by the foundations and remains of housing, food, tools, clothing, work arrangements, human paths, and life on the place. Unfortunately, much of Orser's truly interesting discussion is devoted to explaining why the historical archeologist is unable to offer results that are vitally helpful to the historian using traditional sources. For example, because so many groups at Millwood—slaves, sharecroppers, share tenants, and fixed tenants—used the same buildings over the years, it is nearly impossible to say much that is specific about any one group on the basis of examining the artifacts they left behind. What Orser turned up mainly verified what he had

already gleaned from the rich traditional sources. We are left, then, with few surprises.

The study is a well-written detective story on the use of material culture as evidence, and its succinct and clear explanation of the nature of the discipline is certainly intelligible to the historian. Few historians, however, will come away convinced that the archeological study of Millwood's material culture offered insights that extended beyond Orser's careful use of traditional written and oral historical sources.

*Des Moines and Polk County: Flag on the Prairie*, by Barbara Beving Long. Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1988. 160 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth \$29.95.

REVIEWED BY KEACH JOHNSON, EMERITUS, DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Designed primarily for local history buffs, this is a modest book with limited objectives. It is "an admittedly brief account" (9), writes Long, a prominent historic preservationist, that seeks to "point out the important themes" and "to celebrate the major events" (9) in the history of Des Moines and Polk County beginning with the city's inception in 1843 as an army post and Indian agency. She is successful in achieving her purposes while describing the growth of city and county in the nineteenth century. The four chapters Long devotes to these formative years focus on the developments that shaped the emergence of Des Moines as Iowa's leading commercial, financial, and political center. The chapters include early settlement, the coming of the railroads, the selection of Des Moines as county seat and state capital, the Civil War and its aftermath, and the growth of Des Moines as a transportation and distribution center based on wholesaling, retailing, banking, insurance, publishing, and coal mining. Imbalance sets in, however, and the meaning and importance of themes and events become blurred as Long moves into the twentieth century and squeezes immigration, changes in life styles and living standards, the advent of the interurban, the coming of the automobile, Progressive reform of municipal government, World War I, the depression, and World War II into a single chapter. She then touches on education, religion, entertainment, the arts, and redevelopment of downtown Des Moines in two successive chapters. The final chapter, written by Denny Rehder, a local business historian, comprises historical sketches of a number of prominent business and community organizations that subsidized publication of the volume. Including numer-

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