

Vernacular Architecture in Southern Illinois: The Ethnic Heritage, by John M. Coggeshall and Jo Anne Nast. Shawnee Books. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. 203 pp. Photographs by Randy Tindall. \$19.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY GERALD MANSHEIM, WEST BRANCH

When John M. Coggeshall and Jo Anne Nash decided to change the title of their project from "The Architectural History of Southern Illinois" to "Vernacular Architecture in Southern Illinois," they went beyond local history. By simply adding the word *vernacular* to their title, they joined a vital new field of architectural study, a field that is defined by some of its proponents as the study of the architecture of everyday life. Ignored by most academics, the study of ordinary buildings has been left to a few specialists and local interest groups. With a growing interest in popular culture, however, it has become essential to examine our vernacular tradition. Scholars from a variety of disciplines—including art historians, geographers, archeologists, and folklorists—have joined to examine ordinary people, as well as the ordinary buildings they have built. In the case of *Vernacular Architecture in Southern Illinois*, two anthropologists (one of them the photographer, Gary Tindall) and a museum curator have provided an ethnic study and a photographic exhibit, which this book follows.

The written portion of the book is extremely short: the introduction is five pages long, and the other seven chapters contain only six paragraphs each. As the subtitle indicates, the book focuses on the buildings of different ethnic groups in twelve counties and nineteen towns in southern Illinois. In the introduction the authors clearly explain their intent to examine a wide scope of the built environment, using ethnic studies as a base for determining each building's tradition. The next six chapters offer brief histories of the architecture and communities of six ethnic populations: the French, Anglo-Americans, Germans, Poles, Italians, and Slovaks. The Mississippi River French, in chapter two, are familiar to many readers because of previous studies. However, the two pages of text uncover new material, and most of the twenty photographs represent new findings. The chapters on the later immigrant groups are equally rewarding, and since they are less well known than the French, they are full of surprises. In the last chapter, "The Eclectic Influences," the authors explain the changes in building techniques and materials from the late eighteenth century to the post-Civil War period. They also point out the effects of manufacturing and standardized products, as well as the role of popular culture, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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

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