

America's Country Schools, by Andrew Gulliford. Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1984. 291 pp. Illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index of schools. \$18.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY L. GLENN SMITH, NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

America's Country Schools is a lovely book. Meticulously researched, thoughtfully written, extensively illustrated, and tastefully designed, it is attractively produced and fulfills the National Trust for Historic Preservation's mandate "to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings and objects significant in American history and culture." The one-room school is certainly a significant item in American history and culture—and it is on the verge of disappearing.

The book's major contribution is that it represents the first attempt to catalog extant one-room schools on a nationwide basis. Almost as significant is the practical advice, including case studies of successful restorations. Included in the restoration section is Gulliford's insistence that restorers (and curators of restored buildings serving as museums) understand what happened in the school while it was in active service. On this front, the book illustrates the problem better than it offers a model for emulation. Gulliford's interpretive approach consists of reflecting in his text a cross-section of what exists in the literature. His decision not to acknowledge, much less take sides in, the conflicting interpretations embodied in historical accounts is understandable, but it will not aid restorationists in their tasks. If anything, his example may well discourage others seeking a sympathetic understanding of the place of one-room schools in American (and Canadian and Australian) development.

The interpretive conflict can be dichotomized as follows: (1) One-room schools were crude, backward, uncomfortable, methodologically unsophisticated efforts to provide cheap instruction in the three R's to rural people. Their consolidation into graded, professionally supervised units was the central focus of educational reformers from Horace Mann in the 1840s to the present. (2) One-room schools were concrete expressions of the central place education has held for Americans from earliest European settlement. Most of what has been called progressive or humanistic or innovative or child-centered in the twentieth century was first discovered in one-room schools. The indictment and discrediting of these schools by educational reformers was part of a larger struggle between town and country, between East and West, between North and South, that has permeated American development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Most twentieth-century accounts have been anchored in the first of these fundamentally conflicting interpretations. As a result, a substantial body of literature interprets what happened in one-room schools as pretty dismal. A book review is not the place to advance arguments, much less try to settle them. Yet the more one reads primary accounts of one-room schools—the dominant form of American schooling from the 1630s to the 1930s—the more difficult this interpretation is to sustain.

Frederick Jackson Turner, in his famous 1892 essay, noted that local educational control meant that the populism of the frontier had produced far-reaching pedagogical change. Most historians have not come to terms with that issue (Karl Kaestle and Barbara Finkelstein are notable exceptions). Andrew Gulliford is in the company of the majority, but his book suggests a starting point from which a quite different view may emerge. With the passing of one more generation, few living Americans will have attended one-room schools. Perhaps the time is finally close when a fresh view of this central aspect of the American experience can emerge.

Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation, by Samuel N. Stokes, A. Elizabeth Watson, Genevieve P. Keller, and J. Timothy Keller. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. xxii, 306 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index, appendix. \$42.50 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PATRICK NUNNALLY, THE COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE

Saving America's Countryside is a handbook that summarizes and brings together many of the newest trends in preserving what has variously been called the working countryside, the cultural landscape, or the vernacular landscape. Brought out under the auspices of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the volume clarifies the many strategies and tools that have been employed to preserve the cultural landscape. The step-by-step, topically oriented approach to the body of the book, which marks it as a reference handbook, is balanced by some two dozen nicely illustrated case studies of landscape protection around the country.

Rural conservation is the authors' term for the integrated sense of land protection they promote. The book makes it clear that this kind of preservation borrows from traditional historic preservation, from environmental and ecologically based protection strategies, and from innovations currently being developed to protect agricultural land. Furthermore, rural conservation involves the cooperation of private

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