

*Gateway Cities and Other Essays*, by Leonard K. Eaton. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989. xvii, 203 pp. Illustrations, index, notes. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LOREN N. HORTON, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

This book is a difficult volume to review, because it ranges from sparkling narrative and brilliant deductions to fuzzy and turgid verbiage, with a lack of overall cohesion. In spite of this inauspicious beginning for a review, I liked the book very much—or at least I liked very much most of the essays in the book, for the parts of the book are much better than the whole.

The first five essays are all about warehouses in the Midwest and Great Plains, with excellent descriptions of their appearances and functions. The first essay is a challenging overview on the general topic of warehouses, in *Gateway Cities* or otherwise. It is comprehensive, logical, and stands nicely by itself as a social commentary. Throughout the essays on warehouses, there is valuable and thorough information about the education, training, and experience of architects from about 1880 to 1920. This, along with the focus on the relationship between the client and the architect, adds to our knowledge of the profession and its economic and social context. Overall, Eaton calls attention to the importance of the matrix of architecture and the other visual arts, and to the structural and functional considerations of warehouses that reflect that matrix. Warehouses *are* important, they *have* been neglected by historians, and these essays go far to remedy this defect. We can only hope that these essays cause other historians, architectural and otherwise, to pursue the study of the jobbing heritage of our built environment before it disappears entirely and is replaced by pole barns.

Besides the warehouse essays, there are four additional essays with no particular relationship between or among them. The essay on Oscar Eckerman is superb, a real contribution to architectural history. The essay on Jens Jensen is equally good, and explains much about a great man. But the essay on the John Wellborn Root buildings is puzzling. It almost seems as if it is composed of fragments of research notes the author is determined to use even though they don't fit anywhere.

The author correctly notes that it is unusual to have an essay on George Caleb Bingham in a book mostly about warehouses and architecture. But other than the slip of fact on page 158 (it was William Henry Harrison, not Benjamin, who was elected president in 1840), this essay is probably the best of the lot, a strong statement because other than the essay on the Root buildings, the essays are all very

good. The treatment of Bingham is wonderful, and stands on its own as a cultural document. It brings up many points, convinces on most of them, and raises issues that may call into question the interpretation of many artistic works of the nineteenth century.

Generally speaking, the book is a peculiar collection which any historian or architect or artist would enjoy reading, but might feel like unbinding into its component parts before doing so. The essays on Eckerman, Jensen, and Bingham are fine literary and historical productions. The series of essays on the warehouses in Gateway Cities are excellent narratives and evaluations. Only the essay on the Root buildings falls short of being a convincing contribution.

The author brings much new and valuable information to the attention of the reading public. His research provides the necessary groundwork for more detailed surveys and analyses of the industrial and commercial architecture of the Midwest and Great Plains. It is high time that this aspect of our past is examined and recorded, and that this area of the country receives the attention it deserves and the credit it warrants for excellence in construction techniques, use of materials, and designs for function. Professor Eaton has done a yeoman's task, which is not negated by the organizational problems or the unevenness of some of the treatments of architects, buildings, and clients. We have here the evidence of a good mind at work in a rich field, with rewarding results.

*Railroads in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Robert L. Frey. *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography*. New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1988. xxxiii, 439 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$75.00 cloth.

*Railroads in the Age of Regulation, 1900-1980*, edited by Keith L. Bryant, Jr. *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography*. New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1988. xxix, 499 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$75.00 on cloth.

REVIEWED BY MERLE DAVIS, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

These books comprise the two volumes devoted to the history of American railroads and railroad leaders in a new series published by Facts on File under the general title, *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography*. This series chronicles the impact of business and business leaders on life in the United States through biographies of business figures and brief histories of businesses. Each volume or group of volumes in the series covers a particular industry during a

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