

phony of design. Why and when did this drastic change in Wright's architecture occur?

The authors of the five scholarly essays in *Taliesin 1911-1914* suggest some answers. They identify as the turning point in Wright's work the house Taliesin that he built for himself and Mamah Borthwick Cheney on a rural site near Spring Green, Wisconsin, in 1911. Like Cedar Rock, the house nestles near a hill crest, overlooks a river bend, and gives its occupants picturesque views of the landscape. Taliesin was the first of Wright's Natural houses; Cedar Rock is its descendant. The last essay's discussion of the drawings and photographs of Taliesin recreates it clearly for the reader. The other essays, about literature and culture, discern ideas that influenced Wright at this transitional time in his life. These include the myth of the ancient Welsh bard Taliesin and its eighteenth-century elaborations, Thomas Carlyle's great-man theory of history, Richard Hovey's poetry and drama, Swedish radical thinker Ellen Key's social ideas, and Tennyson's poem "The Flower in the Crannied Wall." An architect of international acclaim, influenced by a wide range of thinkers, Wright focused his design genius on buildings for clients in Iowa that earn him a place in the history of the state.

Measure of Emptiness: Grain Elevators in the American Landscape, by Frank Gohlke, with a concluding essay by John C. Hudson. Creating the North American Landscape Series. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. xi. 107 pp. Illustrations. \$29.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD FRANCAVIGLIA, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

Grain elevators are a distinctive feature of the American landscape, especially in the Great Plains and prairies, where they can be seen for miles. It is fitting that this book consists of three main parts—a personal and insightful essay on the visual and symbolic significance of grain elevators; forty-four evocative black-and-white photos of a variety of grain elevators in plains/prairie locales from Texas to Minnesota; and an informative concluding essay, "The Grain Elevator: An American Invention," by geographer John Hudson, which places the grain elevator in historical and geographical context. Although Iowa is only mentioned or featured occasionally, this book will be of interest to Iowa historians because grain elevators are such an important feature of Iowa's past and present

landscapes. The elevators featured cover a range of architectural styles (cylindrical/concrete; wooden/metal sheathed), and both terminal and country elevators are illustrated.

As part of the Johns Hopkins series, *Creating the North American Landscape, Measure of Emptiness* offers important insights into the character of ordinary but meaningful landscapes. The book portrays the grain elevator as a symbol of community vitality, economic energy, and individualism. It confirms what many Iowa historians have long deduced—that the distinctive country elevator is vanishing along with railroad branchlines and country depots. Because it provides a visual-geographical approach, this book will help readers see grain elevators as part of a complex evolving system of grain distribution connecting local communities to outside markets. I highly recommend *Measure of Emptiness* to readers interested in agricultural, architectural, and economic history.

Ballad to an Iowa Farmer and Other Reflections, by Clark Mollenhoff. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. xxiii, 85 pp. Illustrations. \$17.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PETER H. JAYNES, KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Twenty brief poems, "reflections on farm, family and school," and twenty-five "reflections on war" appear, at first glance, as strange material for review in an historical journal. The fact that they were written by the late Clark Mollenhoff, native Iowan, Pulitzer prize-winner, author, and *Des Moines Register* investigative reporter does not explain their selection. The rationale rests in the foreword, which suggests that the poems will "strike a nostalgic chord" in the reader; in the prologue, which quotes William Wordsworth's claim that "poetry is the most philosophic of all writing . . . its object is truth . . . carried alive into the heart by passion"; and in the poems themselves.

Older Iowans will be reminded of a bygone way of life while younger ones may gain new understanding of how life used to be here. Historians, although not obtaining new "facts" or quantifiable data, may benefit by hearing the emotions and understandings of ordinary people facing various crises as well as living the usual events of a past everyday life. That is, historians may gain a more complete picture of what they frequently write about, especially since their discussion is often distanced from the individuals making that history. This slim volume could help them understand interpersonal relations and sources of self-image in a rural commu-

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