

Although "the telephone is being used creatively by women to transcend both the barriers of space that once dissolved family ties and the distinction between family and work" (79), there are still clear community expectations as to what is appropriate talk/space for women. Rakow demonstrates, however, that "even in a rural and conservative town like Prospect" (1), these parameters are in constant contention, and the telephone serves as a primary site of this negotiation.

The second part of the book, "Women's Voices," contains transcriptions of interviews conducted with six Prospect women of various ages and socioeconomic positions. These illustrate in the women's own words the themes of Rakow's analysis of women's relationships to the telephone. The interviews personalize Rakow's analysis and ground her theory in the context of everyday life.

Gender on the Line offers important insights for historians of gender, the Midwest, and technology. Although Rakow focuses exclusively on the telephone's role in the active gendering of one community, her approach opens up possibilities for exploring and challenging the supposedly neutral roles other technologies play and have played in other small towns. This type of intensive study is certainly pertinent for students of local history interested in exploring how relationships and social practices are shaped and shift as underlying structures of community change. Although most historians do not have the luxury of conversing with their subjects, they can employ ethnographic tools which allow one to examine particular social practices as implicated in a complex web of other community structures and relationships. Rakow convincingly demonstrates the utility of such an approach to the study of gender as a social construction.

Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums, by Thomas J. Schlereth. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992. xxx, 440 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, index. \$19.95 paper.

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Thomas J. Schlereth, professor of American studies at the University of Notre Dame, is widely known for his publications and addresses concerning the emergent field of "material culture." The present book, first published in 1990 in Simon J. Bronner's UMI Research Press series, *American Material Culture and Folklife*, gathers sixteen of Schlereth's (mostly) previously published pieces

plus an introduction, a prologue, and an epilogue. It is profusely illustrated.

Trained at the University of Iowa, where he worked under intellectual historian Stow Persons, Schlereth discovered material culture after graduate school, and since then has become probably its foremost advocate. That is, his is the voice that more than others has called scholars in many fields—especially history—to attend to the physical evidence that may be used to document past lives and eras. Schlereth directs attention to that evidence largely by offering methodological guidance for the uninitiated, rather than (as with a scholar such as Simon J. Bronner himself or Henry Glassie) offering intensive case studies that can serve as models for the work of others even as they advance our understanding of particular situations or periods. Schlereth's forte is the motivational address rather than the monograph.

The pieces gathered here, thirteen first published between 1977 and 1989 and the others largely appearing elsewhere concurrently, are divided into three large parts ("Everyday Life," "Public Landscapes," and "Museums as Artifacts"). The book covers a wide range of situations and subjects, including the following: the cultural aspects of horticulture; mail order catalogs as guides to "past things"; the world of childhood objects; artisans of the early republic; the physical and social realm of office workers; urban design in several contexts; the "downstream" influence of New England culture on the midwestern landscape; the "places" of the Chautauqua movement; the expansive sites of world's fairs; and the past and present of history museums.

Binding together this miscellany is a constant and consistent stress on "opportunities for study"—specifically, opportunities for expanding our grasp of these and many other questions by diligent attention to the material evidence that, even as it accumulates in ever-deeper piles in history museums, seems largely ignored by professional historians. Schlereth is eloquent on the usefulness of this evidence, persuasive on the theoretical bases for employing it, and most helpful in offering counsel to the uninitiated. He demonstrates, for instance, how much can be learned about labor in the early republic by examining surviving visual evidence that depicts typical craftshop routines, tools, and products. He likewise shows what the furnishings and tools of the typical late nineteenth-century office can reveal about how the grandchildren of those republican artisans were transformed into white collar help later in the century. In these cases, as in others, however, his genius lies not so much in explicating specific historical circumstances by means of

material evidence, as in directing his readers to the existence, location, and inherent qualities of that evidence itself.

In his final section, on museums, Schlereth does go further. Here, as in his more substantive earlier work on the intellectual history of the material culture/life movement (especially *Material Culture Studies in America* [1982] and *Material Culture: A Research Guide* [1984]), he provides perceptive overviews of a variety of interconnected topics. These include the origins, development, and current practices of museums, and particularly history museums, in North America. Although it is the institutional infrastructure which must support any more serious engagement of material evidence by historians, the history museum is largely unknown territory for the vast majority of text-based historians today. More and more historians have been employed in the museum field itself over the past two decades, a hopeful sign of an eventual convergence between the descriptive connoisseurship typical of museums in the past and the more analytical bent of academic history. Another hopeful sign is the fact that museums themselves are producing more analytical scholarly products today, especially as exhibitions based on social history and the politics of culture are now increasingly reported in sophisticated catalogs that, at their best, are scholarly monographs in their own right. The increasing attention to exhibition reviews in academic journals, such as *American Quarterly* and *The Journal of American History*, bespeaks a convergence from the other direction. Indeed, *American Quarterly*, the official journal of the American Studies Association, is now edited by Gary Kulik, a cultural historian with a Ph.D. in American studies who previously was curator at a historic industrial site in Rhode Island and is now chair of the Department of Social and Cultural History at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.

Cultural History and Material Culture is a timely recollection of Schlereth's most useful pieces, with quite pertinent new headnotes and an apparatus that unifies the whole without imposing hindsight on the older pieces. It may be most helpful as a reminder of what kinds of questions three-dimensional evidence can help us ask, and as a kind of handbook that can direct apprentice material scholars, cheer the intermediate practitioners, and help us identify and applaud the masters. Because it was written in the Midwest and makes frequent use of midwestern evidence and situations, it will have added appeal for scholars, museum professionals, and interested general readers in the region. It is completely accessible and engagingly written.

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