

enforcement and penitentiaries during that era, and American culture during the post-Civil War period that spawned many of our country's most noted outlaws. Their bibliography, which lists only four books published in the twentieth century, also reflects their failure to contextualize the life of this long-overlooked midwestern outlaw.

*Palaces on the Prairie*, by Rod Evans. Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 2009. iii, 241 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Mary Anne Beecher is associate professor of architecture at the University of Manitoba. Her research and writing have focused on vernacular architecture, especially roadside architecture.

Whether considering the popularity of Seattle's 1962 Space Needle or Herzog and de Meuron's more recent Beijing National Stadium known as The Bird's Nest, the public's fascination with architectural spectacles is undeniable. With Rod Evans's recent book on the corn, bluegrass, coal, flax, grain, alfalfa, cotton, and sugar beet "palaces" that sprang up across the Midwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we learn the history of such obscure American structures and the events that coincided with them. The role of such architectural oddities in local boosterism and regional competitiveness (and the occasional cooperation that emerged among communities as well) is articulated in the careful detail with which Evans documents the history of each unique structure.

This book is essentially an encyclopedia of the palaces clad in grain, corn, and various other types of crops produced across the prairie and plains states in the late nineteenth century. Eager to show off their productivity to the world while celebrating their cultural sophistication and the arrival of modern conveniences such as electric street lighting, the townspeople of such places as Sioux City, Iowa; Grand Island, Nebraska; and Waco, Texas, concocted plans and raised funds to build novel exposition structures as a way of gaining regional or national attention. The structures ranged in size from something equivalent to today's double garage to grand edifices that surpassed 40,000 square feet in area at heights of more than 100 feet. Such structures were usually built and rebuilt annually since crops or coal make rather temporary cladding. The only corn-clad exposition building that still survives is in Mitchell, South Dakota, and it remains a well-known local attraction for travelers still willing to take a little detour from Interstate 90. Evans documents at least 23 such "palaces" that were constructed (and reconstructed) in small to medium-sized cities in Iowa, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Missouri, Texas, Wyoming, and Illinois in the late 1880s

and into the 1890s. Iowans will be especially interested in Evans's careful documentation of the successive corn palaces of Sioux City, Creston's bluegrass palaces, Forest City's flax palaces, and Ottumwa's coal palaces — all of which date to the period 1887–1893.

The book is well illustrated with exterior and interior photographs of the palaces. A sampling of newspaper excerpts from the period and the author's extensive use of quotations from journalistic sources add vividness to his narrative. The shortcoming of the text is its allegiance to description. It would have been helpful if Evans had provided a greater sense of the larger cultural context for these buildings and events to help explain the appeal of this strategy for boosterism and the meaning of the use of produce to represent communities in these rural places at the time of the palaces' short-lived popularity. Historian Pamela Simpson has also written about corn palaces, for instance, in an effort to discuss the mediation of racial issues in the late nineteenth century. Evans's careful reconstruction of the processes that led to the construction of the palaces seems like an opportunity to gain insight into the dynamics of local politics and perhaps a better understanding of the relationships between commercial and agricultural production at the time the palaces were in development. It would also be interesting to know more about how the palaces were actually built. Explaining how ears of corn or chunks of coal were attached to the surfaces — especially with regard to some of the detailed interior treatments — would add a dimension to this history that has yet to be thoroughly addressed.

*For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda and the Home Front*, by Celia Malone Kingsbury. *Studies in War, Society, and the Military*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. 309 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Barbara Jean Steinson is professor of history at DePauw University. She is the author of *American Women's Activism in World War I* (1982).

Celia Malone Kingsbury's *For Home and Country: Propaganda and the Home Front* explores wartime popular literature, cover art, commercial illustrations, and government posters produced in the Allied nations. Although the poster art is familiar to students of World War I, the author contributes engaging interpretive summaries of little-known pro-war fiction that will undoubtedly spur those interested in wartime popular culture to read some of those works in their entirety. Focusing on the ways women and children "become both a major focus of and a major tool of social manipulation" (10), Kingsbury develops this theme in chapters on food and domestic science, women's war service and