

Historic Architecture Sourcebook, edited by Cyril M. Harris. Columbia University: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1977. \$19.95.

Whether you are a designer or an architect, homeowner or apartment dweller; historian or student, the *Historic Architecture Sourcebook*, edited by C. M. Harris, will become one of your most valuable reference books. It contains many varied architectural terms. One can use its contents the same as a dictionary, just don't expect to find any correct pronunciation keys after the words to be defined. Harris's previous book—*Dictionary of Architecture and Construction* has also excluded pronunciations even though its title says that it is a dictionary. With either book you are still going to need a dictionary alongside—especially for words such as these—*arriere-voussure*, *coelanaglyphic relief*, *ekklesiasterion*, *kubovatoye pokrytiye*, *meshrebeeyeh*, *shatroboye pokrytiye*, *zvonitsa* . . . had enough?

The book makes up for a lack of pronunciation guides with an abundance of over 5,000 terms defined quite clearly and concisely. There are approximately 2,000 alphabetized line drawings and a few photographs. Obviously, Harris has been preparing and collecting these drawings for several years.

Many definitions include more than one drawing per term, as evidenced by the fourteen illustrations alone of a gargoyle. Illustrations of the following terms—conditorium, (p. 130); pendentive bracketing, (p. 407); puteal, (p. 438); sudatorium (p. 512); and umbo (p. 58) are examples of very simple ink drawings as compared to some of the more elaborate full page engravings found throughout the book on such terms as the Empire Style, Louis XV style, and the Ionic order. The drawings enable just about anyone with or without a knowledge of architectural terms to be able to understand the definitions. The editor's decision to use predominantly line drawings emphasizes the salient features of the terms defined.

—Scherrrie Goettsch
Des Moines

The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa, by LeRoy G. Pratt. Mason City: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Company, 1977.

Most Iowans are surprised to learn there are ninety-nine counties on that checkerboard map of their state. That's a lot of counties. Only seven states have more.

This book has been much needed, not just for map locations, which it amply has, but, more importantly, for bringing together all the rich lore of Iowa county histories. The courthouse pictures and descriptions are a happy plus.

LeRoy Pratt of Des Moines somehow has found time, with his wife Louise, to visit every one of Iowa's 101 courthouses, gathering pictures and research-

ing records (there are 101 courthouses because Pottawattamie and Lee County each has two). His book capsules county histories, with special attention to tracing the architecture tastes of our pioneers as they sought to express themselves in courthouse brick-and-stone while expanding cross-state from the Mississippi to the Missouri River.

Even in times when money was scarce townspeople and farmers willingly sacrificed to build imposing structures, instinctively feeling that citizens should "look up to" the law. Far too often—forty-one times—their costly efforts, as well as their valuable records, were consumed by fire. Faulty flues were not the only cause. In many cases arson was strongly suspected as the means for destroying evidence of embezzlement, theft or robbery. Not well-known is how rife were embezzlements and swindles in early Iowa days, nor how painfully large were the sums lost. In every single case county boards chose to pay off such losses rather than sacrifice their credit ratings.

Pratt's book, in fact, reveals early Iowa to have been far more "wild and woolly" than our sedate county seat towns of today would indicate. In fully two-thirds of Iowa counties fierce, bitter "wars" were fought between newborn little prairie settlements vying for the commercial dominance, political prestige, or simple continuing existence which a county seat designation usually guaranteed.

Seventeen of Iowa's courthouses are included on the National Register of Historic Places. Forty-four constructed prior to 1900 are still in use. The author praises those farsighted and wise citizens who fought to save their local courthouses from the wrecking ball, thus retaining a meaningful link with the past and at the same time avoiding the cost of an expensive new structure. Considering that Iowa has so little historic architecture compared to the eastern states, we should thank those who fought, and those who still fight, the battles for restoration and preservation.

Those who named Iowa's counties must have felt patriotically bound to first of all honor the eleven U.S. presidents up to 1846. Then, with all the presidents out of the way plus a number of favorite Revolutionary War heroes, our Iowa name-seekers turned to the category of "important people" of their day. So we find eighteen of our counties named after governors of states and others after assorted politicians, military heroes and even battle-grounds of the Mexican War.

Such choices have proven unfortunate, though, because most of those names long ago became relegated to historic limbo, so thoroughly forgotten in some cases as to cause doubt concerning the identity of a particular name-sake. One example is Lee County, which many assume was named for Robert E. Lee. Yet that Confederate General was only an inconspicuous young U.S. Army Lieutenant in 1836 when Lee County was established.

Today some may wonder why "Irish Patriots" —O'Brien, Emmet and Mitchell—were considered worthy of having their names commemorated in far-away midwestern America. Or a Hungarian hero, Kossuth. Or why the

names of three Indian maidens are memorialized—Pochahontas, Monona and Tama—but only those of two white women—Louisa and Bremer. (There's some doubt about "Ida").

Pratt's readable book is packed with many droll anecdotes, along with solid county history. It is fun reading, and an invaluable reference book for teachers, students, libraries, researchers and everyone interested in Iowa history. Pratt's photographs of both demolished and replacement Iowa courthouses provide a visual narrative of our state's disparate architectural heritage, a changing popularity chart of Romanesque towers and turrets, Neo-Classic columns and cupolas, Victorian clocks and statuary all the way down to the current boxy style designed primarily for office efficiency. The thing is, these latter just DON'T LOOK like "Iowa Courthouses," the kind which one Iowa expatriate not long ago wanted to buy and re-erect alongside a Los Angeles freeway as a showplace for his law firm. It would have caught the eye for sure, even in California.

—Ralph Hollander
Sheldon, Iowa

1876: A Centennial Offering, by Third Ward Pupils, No. 10, Des Moines, Iowa. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977. pp. 380. \$8.95.

The Smithsonian Institution sponsored the publication (by the Iowa State University Press) of this enchanting collection of essays, stories, artwork, and poems by an 1876 class of sixth-grade students at Irving School, Des Moines. The original hand-written, hand-drawn pages have been reproduced precisely, so we have a replica faithful to the original manuscript. The young students' penmanship is nearly flawless; their intriguing drawings are well-executed; and the sentiments and information conveyed are true gifts from the children of 1876 to the children (and adults) of today.

The manuscript was one of many prepared for display in the 1876 Centennial Exhibition held in Philadelphia. The extraordinary writings and drawings in *A Centennial Offering* distinguished it from the hundreds of manuscripts entered in that exhibition. It was returned for safe-keeping to the Historical Building in Des Moines, and remained there until it was loaned in February 1976 to the Smithsonian for exhibition during the nation's Bicentennial.

The project manager for the 1976 exhibition, William Miner, decided that the best way to "display" this manuscript was to have it duplicated and widely distributed. The Iowa State University Press has done a commendable job in printing and binding the collection, and the public now has access to a treasurable legacy.

—J.G.

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