

*Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Wesley I. Shank. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999. ix, 217 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, bibliography. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAN OLIVE NASH, TALLGRASS HISTORIANS L.C.

Find some space on the reference shelf. Architects, cultural resource managers, and historians (architectural and otherwise) working in the Midwest will want to add this slim, user-friendly volume to their collection. Wesley I. Shank, professor emeritus of architecture at Iowa State University, has painstakingly compiled the essential biographical data for more than 200 architects who lived and worked in Iowa through 1950. Short entries for each architect contain vital dates, family connections, education or professional training, and career paths and partnerships. A brief and admittedly incomplete list of commissions follows that includes the location and construction date for each building. Finally, each entry has a list of references. These sources are repeated in a more extensive and loosely annotated bibliography.

With missionary effort, Shank shuffled and resorted his data into several useful appendixes that either add new material or enable researchers with varying levels of information to locate their architect. The first appendix lists architects' names by the city where they maintained an office. The second contains architects arranged by the educational institute that trained them. The third contains short biographies of important out-of-state architects who worked in Iowa but did not reside in the state. The likes of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Eero Saarinen are, after all, hard to ignore, and their work surely transcends the artificial boundaries of state borders or book titles. The only tool missing from the book is an index, a somewhat surprising omission in a reference work.

The primary sources tapped for *Iowa's Historic Architects* are extensive and include the growing collection of "gray literature" that explores the nation's constructed landscapes via cultural resource studies and National Register nominations. The author does a great service to researchers by publishing historical information from this enormous but largely inaccessible storehouse written over the past 30 years and filed away in government offices. Shank also relies heavily on records from the American Institute of Architects, archival collections at Iowa State University and the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota, and biographical entries from turn-of-the-century local histories. Unfortunately, at times the book seems driven by these local history sources. The entry for William Chalmers Barton, for example, tells us he was "born in Bloomington (or possibly nearby Lex-

ington), Illinois, the son of Lowry Barton and Rachel Knox Wilson Barton, who were both born in Pennsylvania." Further, "he was an ardent golfer . . . a charter member of two golf clubs and organizer of a golf and tennis club" (17-18). While this information adds color and texture, it seems more appropriate to a social register or a genealogical record than a serious reference work. Unfiltered biographical data, however, are more than made up for by the exceptional utility of the book as a whole.

Shank, who is author of another useful reference work, *The Iowa Catalog: Historic American Buildings Survey* (1979), includes a brief history of the professionalization of architecture in Iowa and the nation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Drawing on parallels within the medical field, he argues that new university programs and professional societies elevated the business of constructing buildings out of "the hands of makeshift practitioners" (1). While this thesis—that professionalism led to better architects and better buildings—is not novel, Shank places the activities of Iowa architects alongside the broader impact of a growing, better-educated middle class. This increasingly self-conscious population not only contributed the (overwhelmingly male) candidates for architectural training, it also supported the reforms to building codes that protected the public from unsafe or unsanitary buildings and, ultimately, the restrictive licensing statutes that made architecture an exclusive profession. In Iowa, these restrictions came about in 1927 in the form of a registration law that required new architects to pass an examination and possess certain levels of education and experience. Professionalization of architecture in Iowa and the rest of the states, like the professionalization of medicine and law, established a much smaller and more exclusive community of practitioners who conversed and shared ideas on a much broader geographic level. It is less surprising, then, though no less enchanting, when one encounters a "jewel box" bank by Chicago architect Louis Sullivan on a main street in the heart of Iowa.

*American Legislative Leaders in the Midwest, 1911-1994*, edited by Nancy Weatherly Sharp and James Roger Sharp. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997. xiii, 358 pp. Tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$99.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAMES E. MCMILLAN, CENTRAL COLLEGE

*American Legislative Leaders in the Midwest* is one of four regional volumes delineating the speakers of the house (or lower legislative branch)

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