

simple nostalgia, this book nevertheless does not attempt to show how power relationships or divisions along ethnic, gender, and class lines might rupture community. That aside, it is a welcome addition to a growing shelf of books about small towns, rural landscape, and the workings of place in people's lives.

*Small Town America*, by David Plowden. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994. 159 pp. Photographs. \$49.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MARY E. NOBLE, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES

For his nineteenth book, David Plowden has assembled 111 of his black-and-white photographs taken from 1962 through 1992 in small towns from Rhode Island and upstate New York west to Idaho and as far south as West Virginia, Kansas, and Oklahoma. David McCullough introduces the collection with a brief discussion of small towns as depicted in American literature and drama, and prepares the reader/viewer for Plowden's straightforward documentary approach—"never dressing the set, never rearranging" (6). In his own substantial essay, Plowden sets forth his intention to compile the story of a composite "'anytown' . . . the generic aspects that were once common to all, and those that are in danger of disappearing" (9). Indeed, the photographs have been carefully arranged to guide the viewer successively through the central business district stores, cafes, taverns, and lodge halls to the local governmental agencies (post offices, courthouses, schools, libraries), residential areas, churches, and, finally, to the town's edge where are found the businesses most obviously related to the farmland beyond—feed mills and grain elevators. Along the way, street scenes precede exterior and interior views of individual buildings. Occasionally the proprietors, employees, customers, or inhabitants appear, gazing matter-of-factly forward, amidst workplace or home surroundings. Plowden photographs individual persons and their homes or businesses only with permission, which may explain why most of the pictures are unpeopled and many show careful arrangement within the spaces shown. His willing portrait subjects are more often men than women, and all but one in this collection are white.

Twenty-four of these photographs, the most from a single state, were taken in Iowa in 1986–87, presumably as Plowden worked on his book of Iowa photographs, *A Sense of Place* (1988); seven appear in both books. Here, although the page size is nearly the same, the images are larger and slightly darker and warmer in tone. The two books complement each other in Plowden's text as well as in the pictures. There are variant views from the same locales, such as the

Cedar Bluff general store (closed shortly after Plowden's visit), which is represented by two interiors here and three different views in the Iowa book. The bathroom in the Brooklyn Hotel, with its mountain scenery hand-painted on the walls behind the claw-footed tub, is in both books, but only in this essay does Plowden tell of the itinerant Bavarian artist who came to decorate the hotel walls. Such anecdotes lend background and interest to many of the pictures, but Plowden chiefly lets the pictures speak for themselves, providing only brief captions with the place and year they were taken, and the names of individual persons, businesses, and so forth when they are specifically portrayed.

Plowden's essay is devoted to an account of the evolution of his native community of Putney, Vermont, as he knew it from the 1940s to the early 1990s, and to observations from the other towns (chiefly midwestern) in which he has lived and worked. He describes the factors—the "automobilization of America" (45) and the growth of agribusiness—which led inevitably to changing or destroying the towns' purposes and identities. He photographs, however, not the most blatant results of that change, such as the now familiar "nation-wide mega-chains [that have] come to squat like vultures at a town's fringes" (45), but seeks out the remaining elements that, in contrast, document "our cherished individuality and ingeniousness" (46). Plowden's images are sharply focused and varied in subject and composition, providing a wealth of material to stimulate interest and thought regarding the fate of these communities.

*The La Follettes of Wisconsin: Love and Politics in Progressive America*, by Bernard A. Weisberger. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. xvii, 318 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY HERBERT F. MARGULIES, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MANOA

The political careers of two strong men, Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin and Albert B. Cummins of Iowa, paralleled and intertwined for two decades. Both men were reform governors at the inception of the Progressive movement after 1900; both went to the Senate as progressive Republicans; both aspired to the presidency. La Follette and Cummins both reflected the midwestern brand of isolationism, which had a large progressive component, and both battled against the armed ship bill in 1917, fearing involvement in World War I. Sometimes they worked together, but often they were rivals. Eventually their careers diverged. Cummins grew more conservative; La Follette continued to trumpet unreconstructed progressivism until his death

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