

Nebraska Quilts and Quiltmakers, edited by Patricia Cox Crews and Ronald C. Naugle. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. ix, 245 pp. Illustrations (some in color), notes, bibliography, indexes. \$25.00 paper.

Quilts of Indiana: Crossroads of Memories, by the Indiana Quilt Registry Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. viii, 181 pp. Illustrations (some in color), map, bibliography, glossary, index. \$37.50 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Quilts in Community: Ohio's Traditions, by Ricky Clark, George W. Knepper, and Ellice Ronsheim. Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1991. 176 pp. Illustrations (some in color), notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY GAYLE R. DAVIS, WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

These books on Nebraska, Indiana, and Ohio quilts are products of three of the more than forty state quilt documentation projects that have been conducted in the United States since 1981. Each project has emphasized both the historical and the aesthetic importance of this under-researched traditional art form. Workers for the projects dated and photographed thousands of quilts, charted details of their design, size, and construction, and conducted extensive oral interviews with quilt owners or makers. When they were finished, their findings were voluminous. Each state project has established archives to house its collected information, and each has publicized its work in one or more of a variety of forms, including quilt exhibits, symposia, and several types of publications. For example, the Iowa quilt documentation group located almost three thousand quilts, focusing on those made before 1925, and deposited their information at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Des Moines. It also presented seventy of the quilts to the public in an exhibit titled "The Thread That Remains" in the summer of 1990.

The books under review here represent other midwestern projects completed in the last half of the 1980s. They take their places within the growing library of publications based on the quilt projects nationwide. These books celebrate both the most representative and the extraordinary quilts, acknowledging the quiltmakers and exploring the quilting tradition in the context of social history. Though unable to show more than a fraction of the documented quilts, the publications are lavishly illustrated with color photographs. And while each treats state-specific social history and material culture, their individual findings reveal some common midwestern quilt aes-

thetics and traditions that emerge from the states' geographical proximity and overlapping patterns of population migration.

While related in their midwestern subjects, each of these books balances its mix of aesthetic and historical content differently. An essay on state history opens *Nebraska Quilts and Quiltmakers*, and poignant family stories are integrated into the discussions of individual quilts that account for the majority of the book. The quilts are arranged chronologically within groups characterized by a common construction type, such as pieced, appliquéd, or embroidered work. Each quilt is accompanied by an explanatory essay, and all such essays follow a consistent format in covering the relevant social and family history as well as the technical and aesthetic aspects of the quilts. There are sharp color photographs throughout this section and the rest of the book, including some close-up views that illustrate the smaller details of quilt construction. The two concluding chapters are devoted to the contemporary quilt revival and to five of Nebraska's most proficient quiltmakers. The Nebraska book is attractive and effective, whether read "one quilt at a time" or all at once, since the fragments of the book are organized with precise attention to detail.

Quilts of Indiana: Crossroads of Memories also sets the quilts in their social context. Historical sketches introduce six of the chapters, which are sequentially organized from frontier days to the present. The chapters include illustrations of representative quilts and varying amounts of biographical information about the makers. The formal aspects of each quilt are noted, though with a different degree of attention from one quilt to the next. This unevenness is unfortunate, since a sizable number of illustrations lack clarity and cannot substitute for verbal descriptions of the finer design details. Placed within the more general chapters is a well-written, valuable essay by historian Cuesta Benberry on Marie Webster, a notable quiltmaker and designer from Indiana. One wonders why Benberry is the only named author in the book and why this chapter is the only one whose content is supported by end notes and a separate bibliography to aid further enquiries into the subject.

Of the three books, *Quilts in Community: Ohio's Traditions* takes the most widely interdisciplinary approach to its topic, a scope that is relatively unusual in quilt project publications. The authors pay special attention to various ethnic traditions, especially the Germanic, which influence the social history of their state and its quiltmakers. There is also an extensive section on the development, designing, and marketing of fabrics, including illustrative materials ranging from period photographs to mass media advertising and close-ups of fabric swatches. Though one could argue some of the conclusions posed,

their contribution to analytic debates, such as that regarding the origins of particular quilt designs or colors, is valuable in a field that is too often characterized by purely descriptive writing. Unfortunately, this book is weakened by annoying editorial mistakes such as erroneous page references to virtually all of the illustrations and to some index topics. The format of the book is also problematic, making a smooth reading difficult. The captions often unnecessarily repeat the main narrative, and though the long captions and informational inserts are interesting, their placement within the text is unduly obtrusive.

The collective value of these and other books based on quilt documentation projects is the new insights they provide into the influence of region, ethnicity, and time on national quilt aesthetics and traditions. Since the books are locally important and are appreciated for their beauty, their inspiring quilts, and their interesting biographical glimpses, each is properly directed to its respective state's general audience. However, because they are unique resources, these books should also be addressed to the researchers who would build upon their wealth of new information. Though all of the books reviewed here include helpful bibliographies and indexes, only the Nebraska book provides reference notes to the text throughout and includes the archival numbering of each quilt illustrated, features that will aid future research immensely. The Nebraska book sets a model worth emulating if the books are to support further progress in researching this important, vital category of American material culture.

Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV, edited by Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991. 249 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$34.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY FRED W. PETERSON UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, MORRIS

Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV is a selection of papers from the 1989 and 1990 meetings of the Vernacular Architecture Forum. The forum is a professional organization formed more than ten years ago by folklorists, architectural historians, anthropologists, art historians, American studies scholars, geographers, and historic preservationists to share interests and involvement in discovering, documenting, and interpreting previously overlooked and neglected aspects of the architectural history of the nation. This collection of studies is the fourth of a series of edited publications representing some of the best scholarship on the architecture of ordinary persons and common places. It offers the reader work in what the editors

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