

Water Mills of the Missouri Ozarks, by George G. Suggs, Jr., with paintings and illustrations by Jake K. Wells. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. xvii, 204 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY KERRY C. MCGRATH, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

A collaboration between two Southeast Missouri State University faculty—George G. Suggs, Jr., professor of history, and Jake K. Wells, professor emeritus of art—this volume gracefully showcases Wells's twenty-seven watercolors and fourteen sketches of water mills and milling scenes from Missouri's Ozark highland region. As Suggs states, this is not a history of the milling industry. Only general observations about water mills and their role in everyday life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are provided. By means of a tripartite division, Suggs first introduces the reader to water mills, noting how this popular icon appears in lore, song, and expression, and tracking the development of milling technology from antiquity through the nineteenth century. The grist of the volume are "vignettes" covering the physical location, origin, significant owners, singular characteristics, modifications in time, role in local affairs, and present status of twenty water mills. The selection was dictated by the mills that Wells had painted during a 1977 project. The concluding part of the volume is an overview of the multiple functions played by water mills and their operators in rural Ozark life during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and includes a statement on the current ownership and status of the twenty mills.

The Suggs and Wells volume is representative of a popular genre of folk history in Missouri. In fact, Suggs drew on earlier examples in compiling the book. What distinguishes this book is an excellent and eminently readable writing style, citation of sources, and use of scholarly studies as well as popular ones. The book will serve a wide readership. As a solid introduction to a rapidly diminishing cultural resource, it will interest students and the general reader. The map and information about each mill's current ownership and status provide readers with a means of visiting several of these regional landmarks. As Suggs points out, the volume does not meet the need for an in-depth study of Missouri Ozark water mills. However, in compiling secondary data on these twenty mills (only a sample of the extant mill buildings and archeological sites), Suggs aids scholars by identifying individuals, publications, and repositories in Missouri where additional or primary source material might be found.

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