

*To Build in a New Land: Ethnic Landscapes in North America*, edited by Allen G. Noble. Creating the North American Landscape Series. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. x, 458 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL KOOP, MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Johns Hopkins University Press has published *To Build in a New Land*, another in their Creating the North American Landscape Series, which consists of eleven books ranging in subject from cemeteries to greenways and nuclear landscapes to grain elevators. This volume, subtitled *Ethnic Landscapes in North America*, further expands the focus of the series.

*To Build in a New Land* is divided into six parts with an introduction and conclusion by the editor, Allen Noble, and twenty chapters dedicated to the distinctive cultural landscapes created by various European immigrants and by African-American and Native-American groups. Each contributor presents a brief settlement history and then describes a range of ethnically influenced cultural landscape features and artifacts — folk houses, barns, religious buildings, field patterns — that serve as indicators of ethnic retention and assimilation in the New World.

Arranged geographically, the book contains sections on the northeastern, southeastern, central, and western regions of North America. Northeastern ethnic groups include Acadians in Maritime Canada; Irish, English, and Scots in Ontario; and Germans and Welsh in Ohio. In the southeast, authors discuss Scots-Irish and English in Appalachia; eastern American Indians; French Creoles on the Gulf Coast; African Americans in the South; and Cajuns in Louisiana. Central North American chapters include Belgians and Norwegians of Wisconsin; Danes in Iowa and Minnesota; Finns in the Lake Superior region; German-Russian Mennonites in Manitoba; and Czechs in South Dakota. This section will be of particular interest to those studying the material culture of Iowa, since the state has such large Danish and Norwegian populations. The section on western North America consists of five essays, one on Ukrainians in western Canada and four that concentrate on ethnic groups in the southwestern United States: the Navajo, Spanish Americans, Texas Germans, and Basques.

The study lacks balance in its handling of "ethnic landscape." The term is not defined in the introduction, so its meaning must be derived from the text. Rural farmhouses are the focus of nearly every chapter,

but houses are only one element in cultural landscapes that include barns, outbuildings, fences, gardens, trees, drives, and a host of other features. We are left with a rather uneven treatment of ethnic landscapes because some chapters, such as Malcolm L. Comeaux's discussion of Cajuns in Louisiana, provide a more comprehensive interpretation of architecture, material artifacts, and landscape features. Some essays are more descriptive and lack analytical focus. For example, Signe T. Nielsen Betsinger's chapter on Danes in Iowa and Minnesota is primarily a description of representative houses, with considerable emphasis placed on interior furnishings and decoration. She has little discussion of the factors that may have influenced dwelling form, and she simplifies the complexities of European archetypes, which Thomas Carter has studied so well in Utah in a work that is not cited. William Tishler's chapter on Norwegians in Wisconsin provides an opportunity for Iowans to compare and contrast the degree to which Norwegians in Iowa assimilated and created their own ethnic landscape.

Despite the volume's subtitle and ostensible focus on ethnic cultural landscapes on the North American continent, only four essays address Canadian landscapes. This lopsided approach fails to address the vast cultural landscape of the Pacific Northwest as well as several important ethnic groups, including the Hudson Valley Dutch, the French of Quebec, and the midwestern Luxembourgers and Swedes. These and other groups are treated in the collection of brief essays edited by Dell Upton, *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America* (1986), a seminal work that is not cited anywhere in this anthology.

The primary data of cultural landscape studies are the buildings and landscapes themselves, and there is no substitute for firsthand fieldwork. In this regard *To Build in a New Land* is only moderately successful, for nine essays lack measured drawings of buildings and rely on sketches or photographs, lending a one-dimensional quality to the discussion. Other chapters are well illustrated with scaled drawings of vernacular buildings, maps of patterns of land use, and both historic and contemporary photographs.

In the preface, Noble states that many ethnic landscapes "are in danger of being greatly diluted in their effect, or even of disappearing entirely" (ix). This collection of essays provides an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the architecture and cultural landscapes of a sample of the best documented ethnic groups that built North America, but it ultimately contributes little new information to the study of this topic.

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