

*Buildings of Iowa*, by David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim. Society of Architectural Historians' Buildings of the United States Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 565 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, suggested readings, glossary, index. \$45.00 cloth.

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When the British began publication of a county-by-county series on their historic architecture in 1951, American architectural historians realized they should undertake a state-by-state American series. The British took about twenty years to finish their series. We took another twenty before publishing *Buildings of Iowa* and the companion volumes for Michigan, the District of Columbia, and Alaska, which mark the beginning of our series. "The primary objective of each volume," according to the series editor-in-chief, "will be to record, to analyze, and to evaluate the architecture of the state. All of the authors are trained architectural historians who are thoroughly informed in the local aspects of their subjects" (viii).

*Buildings of Iowa* begins with an illustrated introduction that traces the history of human settlements in Iowa from the earliest Native American occupation of the area to the present. It includes agricultural development patterns and the layout of roads, town designs, parks and other aspects of landscape architecture, buildings both rural and urban, and engineering structures such as bridges, grain elevators, and water towers. Typically the authors relate the buildings to historic American architectural styles, but they also trace the historic development of building types (such as houses, churches, banks, gas stations), building technology, and the architectural profession in the state.

Mainly the book is a guidebook organized into five geographic regions, each introduced with a map. The cities of each region are arranged alphabetically. For each city the authors usually make general historical and architectural observations, then list individual buildings. They give building name, construction date, name of the architect (if any), and (usually) address, followed by descriptive, historical, and interpretive comments. Their comments often include some historical background, an analysis of design features, an architectural evaluation, a comparison with relevant American structures elsewhere, and in some cases a small photograph. Buildings receive an identifying number sequenced conveniently for visiting them. Larger cities have maps showing the numbered locations. Rural buildings, listed under a city nearby, have directions for reaching them.

To find out how well the book worked as a guidebook, I took it to several central Iowa towns. I discovered that addresses were generally correct, but there were some errors in the maps. Several buildings were shown in the wrong places, a serious problem if no street address was given. Another shortcoming, vexing even though the "Guide for Users" warns of it, is that the authors list a number of razed buildings and the maps show them, since some of the field work is as much as twelve years old and not updated. In a random check of the book as a reference, I found numerous errors. Common errors related to architects included misspelling of their names and the failure to attribute well-known examples of their work. The errors for Fort Dodge were oddest. The last paragraph of general comments on the city attributes the razed Webster County Courthouse (1859–1861) to local architect A. V. Lambert. Six lines below, the extant courthouse, begun forty-three years later, is also attributed to him, which is patently unlikely. Actually, H. C. Koch & Co. of Milwaukee designed it, as one of the Webster County histories states. Coincidentally, Koch & Co.'s name appears in the right column of the same page (389), correctly given as the architect for the Public Library. The fact that the authors usually give only the last names of building owners is a major shortcoming, for it makes it difficult to connect these people to local and state history. Which Smith, Jones, Carlson, or Peterson was it? Things get worse for Mason City with its two Franke houses and two MacNider houses (416–18).

How well does *Buildings of Iowa* fulfill the series editors' objectives: to record, analyze, and evaluate the architecture of the state? It certainly records extensively, and for this reason it can lead us to the joy of discovery of the architectural riches of the state. I know of one town where the local newspaper ran a series of articles about the five historic buildings that local citizens were proud to discover represented their town in the book.

An architectural historian specializing in American architecture, David Gebhard is well qualified to analyze and evaluate it. He has published extensive scholarly work, especially on the turn-of-the-century period and its architects. In addition, he has authored several architectural guidebooks for California and one for Minnesota, has served as president of the Society of Architectural Historians, and is a member of the editorial board for the *Buildings of the United States* series. Gebhard teaches at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Gerald Mansheim, formerly a painter, has published photographs of Iowa architecture and short articles on it and has authored *Iowa City: An Illustrated History* (1989), where he

describes himself as "first of all a photographer" and modestly states that he still has "no firm idea of what local history ought to be about" (9). Oddly, *Buildings of Iowa* includes no list of photographic credits.

The introduction of the book would appear to bear the imprint of the breadth of Gebhard's understanding of American architecture, as do the comments on many individual buildings. The introduction is noteworthy as one of only a few discussions of the architecture of the whole state that have been written and is probably the most extensive one. In addition, the selection of buildings that the authors have dealt with is characteristic of the architectural heritage of the state, its history, and its people, and is most inclusive. However, the inaccuracies, misspellings, and omissions that I discovered suggest that the authors may not have been familiar enough with the particulars of historic Iowa architecture to give us the quality of record that the editors of the series promise.

*Buildings of Iowa* does, however, bring to our attention hundreds of buildings in one convenient, well-organized, and easy-to-use volume. Its great value is quantitative—how much architecture it brings to light that otherwise we might never discover. Its greatest shortcoming is qualitative. The authors needed to prepare their record of Iowa architecture more carefully and check their work more thoroughly. Serious readers should consult the sources mentioned in the "Suggested Readings." Guidebook users need patiently to allow for errors in the maps. But the book is the most complete architectural guidebook for the whole state that we have and are likely to get for a long time. Used with caution, *Buildings of Iowa* can contribute a great deal toward our pleasure and instruction.

*Homes in the Heartland: Balloon Frame Farmhouses of the Upper Midwest, 1850-1920*, by Fred W. Peterson. Rural America Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992. xi, 296 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JEAN SZEMORE, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

An estimated 95 percent of all buildings worldwide are not designed by professionals, and thus are termed *vernacular*. Just a decade or so ago it was common for the few scholars writing in the field to issue pleas for others to take up the urgent task of documenting and interpreting America's ordinary architecture within its cultural context, whether by rural community, city, county, state, or region. The call has been heeded in recent years as scores of such

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