

Cahokia's Countryside: Household Archaeology, Settlement Patterns, and Social Power, by Mark W. Mehrer. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995. xvii, 213 pp. Illustrations, graphs, tables, site drawings, notes, index. \$29.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA M. TAYLOR, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Panregional archeology is followed closely by both professionals in the field and lay people who are captivated by the emerging stories of North America's geographic and cultural past. Mark W. Mehrer's *Cahokia's Countryside: Household Archaeology, Settlement Patterns, and Social Power* is a cohesive and interesting study that draws on three decades of survey and excavation of the American Bottom region. The American Bottom is located at the convergence of the Missouri, Illinois, and Mississippi Rivers in Illinois between Alton and Columbia. Cahokia, the major town and mound complex in this region, claimed specific, if limited, cultural ties to the Mill Creek area of northwestern Iowa as well as other areas in the upper Midwest (8). Although Cahokia has been the subject of intensive excavation and analysis during the past two decades, Mehrer reminds us that "we still know little of how Cahokia's elites lived, even though we know a bit about how they were buried" (2). Using this earlier interpretive work to complement his own study, Mehrer concentrates on seven hinterland sites to construct a regional model of Mississippian tradition settlement and social power. He describes the project as offering "an understanding of what happened to the houses and house-life of commoners living in the countryside as town-life evolved from village-life" (3). It also builds "a model of Mississippian society emphasizing the role of households in the changing local and regional settlement system" (17). This book will be of interest to Iowans because the methods and techniques Mehrer chose for this analysis are applicable to other regions with similar topographical and small-site features, such as the Gast Farm features of eastern Iowa. This project offers a model of how such settlements could develop and decline.

The clear organization of *Cahokia's Countryside* allows both the professional archeologist and the lay archeology buff to read and enjoy the book. Chapter one is an informative introduction that maps out both the geographic and archeological lay of the land. Mehrer includes maps, photographs, and charts that orient the reader who may be unfamiliar with the American Bottom region. The chronological chart (13) shows the prominent phases of the region, and, with the exception of two phases, all are indexed and explained throughout the book. Chapter two features Mehrer's theoretical framework. He is careful to point out that the "use of theory in this study is

pragmatic, not rhetorical" (22). Mehrer uses aspects of vernacular architecture, household archeology, and social power theory to accomplish this task. Chapter three offers readers an exhaustive layout of the sites and features of the seven chosen areas. This chapter is, perhaps, the most interesting as it includes nearly three dozen site drawings and photographs, which lend visual clarity to Mehrer's methodological schema. Chapters four and five are the most challenging. Aimed primarily at a professional audience, they go into great detail to show "how the configuration of common households . . . sheds light on the development and decline of the region as a whole" (8). Employing more than fifty tables, these two chapters are technically dense and somewhat inaccessible to the lay archeologist. However, there are moments of clarity that make the mental labor worthwhile. In the short conclusion, Mehrer concisely restates his thesis: "There are several different repeating patterns of household layout and examples of common facilities that rose and fell in popularity throughout the region. . . . At the time that Cahokia's planning was carefully regulated, planning in the countryside was relatively casual, often . . . idiosyncratic, and based on logistics rather than arbitrary axes of symmetry" (165). Rural families were self-sufficient, autonomous, and set apart from the social control exerted by elites over town-dwellers. Mehrer's study shows readers how this rural autonomy worked symbiotically with the temple-town first to develop and eventually to dismantle the very society it supported.

I recommend this book, especially as a precursor to a trip to the Cahokia area. The valuable insights as well as the excellent visual materials included in Mehrer's volume could only enhance the reader's walk into the past in Cahokia's countryside.

For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War, by James M. McPherson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. xviii, 237 pp. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY WALLACE HETTLE, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

A basic question for Civil War historians can be posed simply: why did soldiers fight? This historical premise has been explored in classic works such as Bell Wiley's *Johnny Reb* and *Billy Yank*. The motivation of soldiers is a crucial question because the Civil War was a popular contest in which each side relied heavily on volunteers. In his new book, *For Cause and Comrades*, James McPherson examines a "quasi-representative" sample of more than a thousand letters and diaries as a means to explore the forces motivating Civil War soldiers. His

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