

Charleston Blacksmith: The Work of Philip Simmons. By John Michael Vlach. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981. Pp. xiv + 154, black and white photographs, appendix, glossary, bibliographic notes. \$19.95 cloth, \$12.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Stewart Lauterbach.

In **Charleston Blacksmith** John Vlach presents an in-depth portrait of Philip Simmons and the decorative ironwork which Simmons fabricates in Charleston, South Carolina. Combining materials from his extensive field notes, quotations from personal interviews with Simmons, and occasional historical reconstructions used to fill the gaps, Vlach examines several different aspects of the man and his craft. In seven chapters Vlach explores subjects such as Philip Simmons's pre-blacksmithing boyhood on the Sea Islands, his apprenticeship to master smith Peter Simmons, his social standing in the community and his family history, and his role in the continuation of the Charleston wrought iron tradition. One chapter, combining numerous photographs with architectural descriptions, gives a portfolio of Simmons decorative work. Another considers variables like the tradition of decorative ironwork, the customer's aesthetics, and the specific purpose that a piece is to serve, all of which determine the final design adopted by Simmons for each item that he produces. Included is a short appendix dealing with a few of the technical aspects of blacksmithing, a glossary of terms, and a bibliographic essay.

Vlach departs from the usual format of histories of technology like Bealer's **The Art of Blacksmithing** and Watson's **The Village Blacksmith**, as well as from the "how-to for the hobbyist" treatments like Andrews' **Edge of the Anvil** or Tucker's **Practical Projects for the Blacksmith**. Instead, **Charleston Blacksmith** offers a more holistic approach to the study of a particular smith and his iron work. For example, Vlach raises some very important questions concerning such topics as the influence of Afro-American stylistics on Simmons' work, how Simmons' status in the community and reputation as a craftsman help him in the acquisition of certain types of jobs, and Simmons' role as both bearer of and innovator within Charleston's

ironworking tradition. Though one could wish he had explored these questions further, Vlach's attempt to attain some sort of balance in his presentation of Simmons and his craft is excellent and is perhaps the book's major strength. The integration of the craft, the craftsman, and his product parallels developments in folksong scholarship which assume the importance of viewing the song and its singer as parts of an almost inseparable whole, and recognizes the value of interpreting one part in terms of another. **Charleston Blacksmith** is an important addition to the literature of blacksmithing, and also to the broader subject of folk arts and crafts. It is to be hoped that this innovative work will serve as a model for future studies of other craftsmen and other crafts.

From Memory to History, Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research. By Barbara Allen and Lynwood Montell. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981. Pp. 176. \$12.50.

Reviewed by Annette B. Fromm.

Folklore and oral history employ two very similar methodologies. Data is collected in a process which has been glossed as "the interview." Even the information collected orally by both of these disciplines and approaches is somewhat similar and indeed on some occasions overlapping. When you ask about a particular individual or place in a town while conducting an oral history interview, the response might be a fully believable explanatory story which in fact is legendary in quality and content, so that while collecting historically oriented data, you at the same time may be collecting folk narratives. But the problem lies in the "glossing" of these two disciplines and the confusing of their methodologies which is tacitly encouraged by state and federal funding agencies which support local history, oral history, social history, folklore and folk arts projects. While the oral historian may unknowingly, or purposefully, collect folklore and the folklorist is deeply interested in historical data - in