

usable catalog, and he invites the reader to make use of the Northeast Archives' services. This reader, for one, is anxious to begin doing so.

**Grand Ledge Folk Pottery: Tradition at Work.**

By C. Kurt Dewhurst. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press [Simon J. Bronner, series editor: American Material Culture and Folklife Series], 1986 [1983]. Pp. xiv + 139. Preface, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index, black-and-white photographs, historical photographs, maps. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by John B. Wolford.

A revision of his 1983 English and American Studies dissertation from Michigan State University, Dewhurst's *Grand Ledge Folk Pottery* uses the folk pottery tradition of a small town in Michigan to demonstrate a new approach in material folk arts study, namely to support the thesis that "The history and nature of the material folk culture of pottery reveals that occupational groups can function to cultivate, formulate, and transmit folklore and creative behavior" (from the dustcover). Such an approach would logically focus on occupational and organizational folklore, which Dewhurst does. He likewise posits that folklife exists in and adapts to industrialized settings.

Materially, the subject of this book is the folk art production of the workers of the industrial potteries of Grand Ledge. These pieces, predominantly taking the shape of lions, but also lambs, turtles, tree trunks, and other natural objects, were produced by the industrial potters during their free time. Usually they were given to family members or friends, while occasionally they were sold for a nominal price. Typically they were functional as well as

decorative, serving as doorsteps, ashtrays, planters, or water coolers, although purely decorative pieces were fashioned as well. Presumably, these folk art pieces were made almost from the beginning of industrial pottery making in Grand Ledge, ca. 1886. They are made today with the open approval of management.

Apparently, this work's study of the Grand Ledge pottery-making tradition is subservient to the goal of redefining conventional models of folklife and material culture studies. Dewhurst rejects the notion that industrialization necessarily eradicated or even diminished folklife and material culture production. Rather, the American folk adapted to new circumstances and developed new traditions. The Grand Ledge potters exemplify this process, and the Grand Ledge community--in its embracing of the new folk pottery art--exemplifies the community identification and support that incorporates the folk art into the folklife of the area.

Far more problems exist in this study than should. My major two objections concern the scope. Although the author generalizes about the history of folk pottery in America, the history of folk pottery of Grand Ledge, the socioeconomic character of the community, and so on, the presentation is altogether too general. The reader gets no (or at best, a minimal) sense of 1) the specific development of folk pottery in Michigan, or its history, or its patterns of development; 2) the specific backgrounds of the art potters of Grand Ledge--their occupational history, association with conventional folk potters, sociocultural heritage, and so on; or 3) the reasons for the development of the industrial potteries or the backgrounds of the industrialists who developed them.

In terms of theory, Dewhurst only goes through the motions of defining "folk art" by citing Glassie's article in Dorson's *Folklore and Folklife* (1972). Since he is confronting

the conventional understanding of folk art, he is required to justify this pottery as folk art with a longer, more authoritative discussion than he uses. For instance, he does not invoke conventional studies of American folk pottery for comparison or support (such as Burrison's (1983) or Zug's (1986), two of the most recent-- and two of the very best--works on traditional folk pottery). He does not even include them in his bibliography or in his notes.

Dewhurst's work appears to be little more than an incompletely revised edition of his dissertation. The bibliography is incomplete and inconsistent; his "Appendix A: A Statistical Portrait of the Community of Grand Ledge and Eaton County, Michigan," which offers little or no conclusions, should expand to speculate and elaborate on the economic, social, and cultural lives of the people; his "Appendix B: Known Folk Pottery Makers" jumbles together industrial and traditional potters in an unannotated list; the index is incomplete; and, perhaps most importantly, the topic demands a better balance between pictures and text. The pictures are good, but far fewer pictures would have been sufficient to establish their specific points. With a book this short, and with an argument as unconventional as his, Dewhurst should have utilized his space more efficiently and given us more text elaborating his argument.

Much as I had trouble with specifics about this work, I think it is important. I do not believe I overlooked Dewhurst's major points or his intentions for the work, namely that this study's purpose is to highlight the dynamic and current status of American folklife, with a focus on industrial art. Dewhurst makes the valid point that industrial art is a folk art, and one that has traditions outside of its own group. He also ties in occupational folklore and organizational folklore (although again without much of a supporting argument) with

folklife, an important association. However, he damages his thesis and the strength of his examples by providing an insufficient accompanying folklife contextual study. Had he integrated his epilogue ("Study of Material Folk Culture Study") into the text of his work, had he elaborated on the important theoretical and contextual aspects of his study that were simply glossed over, had he worked harder on the index and bibliography, this work would have stood as a major statement integrating folklife and material culture study with occupational and organizational folklore. As it stands, it presents a good starting point for further research.

#### References Cited

Burrison, John A.

1983 *Brothers in Clay*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Glassie, Henry

1972 *Folk Art*. In: *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zug, Charles G., III

1986 *Turners and Burners*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

**Studies in Finnic Folklore: Homage to the Kalevala.** By Felix J. Oinas. Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies; and Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran, 1985. Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series 147 and Finnish Literature Society 387. Pp. 218, table of contents, foreword, acknowledgments, biographical essay (by Matti Kuusi), list of books by author. \$12.00. Paper.