

*American Log Buildings: An Old World Heritage.* By Terry G. Jordan. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985. Pp. x, 193. Illustrations, maps, figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$26.00.)

Probably the universal symbol of the American frontier is the log building. Not only have log buildings in general, and log cabins in particular, become the physical representation of westward expansion, they have also assumed political and social significance in American culture. While the log structure is an American symbol, it is clearly of European origin. Terry G. Jordan's purpose in preparing this book is to document the Old World roots of American log construction.

After reviewing some of the recent major work on the subject, Jordan defines the parameters of his investigation. The study is limited to one type of folk architecture and one colonial culture known as the Midland culture area. "From a presumed hearth area in the Delaware Valley, this style spread with the yeoman farmer frontier and eventually dominated a large wedge of territory broadening to the west from its Pennsylvanian apex, extending as far as the Great Plains" (p. 7). This type of construction appears in most of the eastern half of the United States and includes most of the Midwest.

Jordan thoroughly examines the characteristics of log construction of Midland American log culture. Among these characteristics are timber shaping and placement, corner timbering, gable and roof designs, floor plans of dwellings, log barn construction, and other log structures and fencing. Photographs, illustrations, and maps are effectively used in this section and throughout the book to assist the reader in understanding technical aspects of log construction.

Three different theses of the Old World origins of Midland American log architecture have been proposed, and each are analyzed by Jordan. "The potential agents of diffusion include (1) northern Europeans, mainly Swedes and Finns from central Sweden, who colonized the Delaware Valley beginning in the 1630s; (2) German-speaking Moravians and Schwenkfelders, who came to Pennsylvania and several other colonies from the Czech-Polish-East German borderland in the middle of the eighteenth century; and (3) German-speaking Lutherans, Swiss Reformed, and Mennonites, who emigrated from Alpine and Alemannic regions of southern central Europe beginning about 1710" (p. 7). After carefully analyzing the three potential areas of origin, Jordan concludes "that the greatest shaping influence on Midland American log construction was exerted by settlers from the Fenno-Scandian area" (p. 147).



REPRODUCTION OF THE LINCOLN FAMILY CABIN IN  
SPENCER COUNTY, INDIANA

Courtesy Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial,  
Lincoln City, Indiana.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Jordan's work is the method used to reach his conclusions. While the book contains extensive notes and a complete bibliography, Jordan's primary approach in preparing the book appears to have been investigation through field research. He spent five seasons in the field in Europe and thirteen domestic excursions over a ten-year period examining log structures and origin theories. The result of Jordan's inquiry is a valuable work for understanding both the major characteristics and the heritage of that basic American symbol, the log building.

*Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial,* William E. Bartelt  
*Lincoln City, Ind.*

*Cleveland: A Tradition of Reform.* Edited by David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986. Pp. viii, 218. Illustrations, notes, index. \$27.50.)

David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski argue in the preface that "cities have personalities" (p. vii) and that this book is a