appearances, the range of material included is restricted by the selection of sources. Borchert has relied mainly on books, articles, published documents, and fieldwork, and from appearances has worked very little in manuscript collections. Otherwise, his book seems wholly adequate and complete.

The heartland Borchert describes is not as great or diverse as that featured in a volume edited by James H. Madison, entitled *Heartland* (Bloomington, 1988), about the larger Middle West. Borchert's breadth of analysis is not as great as that of the authors of the twelve essays contained in Madison's volume. A reviewer might easily take issue with the perception of the geographical boundaries and with the range of subject matter contained in the text by Borchert. But this interesting study must be recommended as a substantial contribution to literature about the history and nature of Middle America. With eighty-two figures and nine tables, it doubles as a reference work on economic geography and as a historical survey of cultural growth. General readers, scholars, educators, and librarians all are advised to regard it as an important work.

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The Organic City: Urban Definition & Community Organization, 1880–1920. By Patricia Mooney Melvin. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987. Pp. xii, 227. Figures, tables, maps, notes, bibliographic essay, index. $25.00.)

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Progressive thinkers evolved schemes to create a cooperative commonwealth based on new forms of community organization. Patricia Mooney Melvin's *Organic City* studies one such scheme, the social unit plan. Readers may be disappointed that the book is not as broad as its title suggests, for this is essentially a case study—a good one—of the social unit plan's development and its implementation in Cincinnati. In addition, Melvin weaves into this study the biography of the social unit plan's chief advocate and prophet, Wilbur C. Phillips, using his unpublished writings and his autobiography, *Adventuring for Democracy* (1940). Phillips, a Robert Owen–like figure, attracted considerable support for his social unit plan between 1912 and 1920, and like Owen (who also believed that society would be redeemed cell by cell) Phillips is still to be found, a quarter century after the abandonment of his experiment, "constant in his belief that the social units could remake America into an organic democracy" (p. 167), seeking backers and funding for his hopelessly defunct schemes.

A Harvard graduate, Phillips developed the idea of the social unit plan in the course of work as a health reformer with the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in New York City from 1907 to 1911 and as secretary of Milwaukee's Child Welfare Commission from 1911 to 1914. With other Progressive theorists, Phillips shared a concept of the "New State" that combined a wider democracy with an insistence on a role for experts. Schemes to improve milk supplies, infant health, or maternal care were valuable not only in themselves but as a demonstration of the feasibility of new forms of organization, and were considered to be prototypes of the "New State" hailed by Robert M. La Follette, Herbert Croly, and other Progressive intellectuals. The social unit plan's adoption in the Mohawk-Brighton section of Cincinnati between 1917 and 1920 marked the most complete implementation of Phillips's theories.

Melvin is successful in arguing that this plan, though short-lived, was an important Progressive social experiment. As an approach to neighborhood-based preventive health care, the social unit plan developed an impressive organization, with councils of experts (nurses, physicians, and social workers) and with clients themselves helping to determine goals and programs. The seemingly irreconcilable aims of Progressivism—that of enlarging democracy and its insistence on a role for experts—were yoked together by the social unit plan's organization, at least for a few years. Other Progressive era institutions, such as settlement houses, also paid lip-service to these conflicting goals, but the settlements survived while the social unit plan collapsed. This failure shows how far the social unit plan diverged from the direction social work was taking; as it professionalized, social work was becoming less, not more, democratic. By 1920, the social unit plan was hopelessly at odds with the times, and Melvin describes in a lively chapter the attack on it by Cincinnati's political and welfare leaders. The mayor of Cincinnati condemned the experiment as "the most insidious form of socialism and but one step away from Bolshevism" (p. 130). Despite support from the people of the neighborhoods who had benefited from its comprehensive social services, the social unit plan lost funding and collapsed.

Melvin's study suffers from the tendency of social welfare history to rely on the promoters of schemes and the providers of services rather than on the clients. But if Melvin does not offer a detailed picture of the neighborhoods served or of the social workers and others who supported the social unit plan, she has nevertheless produced a thoroughly researched account of an experiment in social welfare that was also a small-scale experiment in participatory democracy. The social unit plan was a prototype of community organizing experiments of the 1960s with their watchword "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in community plan-

ning. This study rescues it from oblivion and also manages to steer clear of the condescension that sometimes characterizes the history of attempts that failed.

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Main Street Ready-Made: The New Deal Community of Greendale, Wisconsin. By Arnold R. Alanen and Joseph A Eden. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1987. Pp. x, 156. Illustrations, maps, figures, notes, bibliography, tables, index. $20.00.)

Greendale, Wisconsin, like its siblings Greenbelt, Maryland, and Greenhills, Ohio, offers a unique arena to study the dissonance between American ideals and realities. All three New Deal experiments in town-building expressed in their planning the interwar generation's faith in "multi-cellular" and "garden" cities as solutions to a perceived crisis of threatening urban sprawl and a homogenization of people and communities resulting from urban industrialization. Planning advocates, including Lewis Mumford and his colleagues in the Regional Planning Association of America, designed a community which "enhance[d] the bio-social interdependencies within a particular geographic region" (p. 21). It is to the central question raised by this effort at planned communities that Arnold R. Alanen and Joseph A Eden address themselves: how, or to what extent, did these communities fulfill the vision of their planners?

Despite rhetoric advocating these greenbelt towns as the setting for grassroots democracy and proclaiming the residents as new pioneers, New Dealer Rexford G. Tugwell instead embraced the development of these garden cities as an appropriate relief program. The construction of the new towns promised work relief, low-cost housing, land rehabilitation, and a stabilization of urban communities hard hit by the deepening economic depression. The authors argue persuasively that the vision was breathed into the relief program by the staffs of the various projects, which in Greendale's case was led by Elbert Peets, Harvard-trained landscape architect and chief planner for the Greendale project.

Peets designed the environment to reflect his understanding of a "workingman's town," believing that "in actuality and in appearance it must be direct, simple, and practical, free of snobbishness, not afraid of standardization" (p. 38). This design would provide a setting and a framework for a social organization that would be equally direct, simple, and practical. The design sought