

Riley's assessment of women's experience on the frontier does not differ substantially from much that has been written on the subject since John Mack Faragher's *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* was published in 1979. In his book Faragher stressed the common culture that men and women shared with each other and carried with them into the frontier. A part of that shared culture was a set of clearly defined ideas concerning women's proper role in society. Riley uses her evidence to illustrate the impact that those ideas had on conduct of everyday life on both the prairie and the plains and concludes that there was little on either frontier to liberate women from them.

SYLVIA HOFFERT teaches women's history and nineteenth-century social history at Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield. She is the author of *Private Matters: American Attitudes toward Childbearing and Infant Nurture in the Urban North, 1800-1860* (1989).

*Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change.* By Sally McMurry. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 261. Notes, illustrations, figures, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

This book is narrower than its title may indicate. Rather than considering nineteenth-century families and farmhouses generally, it focuses on "several hundred" (p. vii) house plans that northern farmers submitted to agricultural journals from 1830 to the end of the nineteenth century. It stops when architects and home economists took control of advanced thinking about rural houses and ended the progressive, vernacular tradition that gave concrete forms to aspiring farmers' ideas about domestic life. Those ideas are the principal subjects of this impressively argued and abundantly illustrated monograph.

Sally McMurry demonstrates that rural ideas about domesticity differed from the urban and suburban versions that are more familiar to historians. Urban domestic ideology defined homes as sanctuaries; rural domesticity, at least through the mid-nineteenth century, recognized that homes were productive work places. Designs made in light of that recognition put nurseries near kitchens so that mothers could supervise children without much interruption of work. That focus on production weakened later in the century when plans called for assortments of rooms that would satisfy family members' demands for leisure and privacy, but even then rural house planners distinguished themselves from their city counterparts by substituting sitting rooms for parlors. Sitting rooms were supposed to foster economy and unity as opposed to the "family disintegration, economic waste, and idleness" (p. 6) that parlors were thought to epitomize.

Other aspects of domesticity that are considered in relationship to house designs include childrearing, the growing differentiation between women's and men's work that accompanied the "‘de-feminization’ of agriculture" (p. 95), and farm women's growing perception of their work as drudgery. McMurry's discussion of drudgery is particularly illuminating; it suggests that women felt increasingly burdened as they withdrew from farm work, as their families prospered, and even as they acquired advanced tools such as sewing machines.

McMurry's argument about drudgery, like most of the book, rests on the author's penetrating study of the principal nineteenth-century farm journals. As she recognizes, those journals pose a problem; they provide much less information about the "progressive families" (p. 26) that contributed plans and opinions than she would like to have. Apart from a few well-known contributors, such as Lewis Falley Allen, her progressive house designers are shadowy figures. Despite that difficulty, the journals document the ideas of a great many thoughtful farm people as no other sources do. McMurry makes exemplary use of their words and pictures and also draws upon an imposing mass of other primary and secondary sources. Both her analysis and her bibliography will be helpful to students of nineteenth-century rural life.

DONALD B. MARTI is associate professor of history, Indiana University at South Bend. He studies American rural institutions and is now writing about women's participation in the Grange.

*Taking the University to the People: Seventy-five Years of Cooperative Extension.* By Wayne D. Rasmussen. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989. Pp. ix, 300. Illustrations, appendixes, select bibliography, index. \$24.95.)

In this volume Wayne D. Rasmussen surveys the history of the Cooperative Extension throughout the entire nation. The book commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Smith Lever Act, which established the Cooperative Extension Service in 1914. Approaching the subject in both a chronological and topical manner, Rasmussen first presents (following an introductory chapter) four chapters on the historical development of Extension, tracing the organization from the days of farmers' institutes through the end of World War II. He then treats his subject in a topical manner in chapters on the relationship between Extension and the farmer; the home (including health and nutrition); youth and leadership; and rural and community development. He ends with a chapter on the next seventy-five years, discussing problems that Extension may face and making some suggestions for the future. Throughout, he has much praise for the Extension Service and its accomplishments.