

Overall, the book's valuable contributions to methodology, classification, and information far outweigh its few shortcomings. As an excellent classification and field guide, *Common Houses* should be consulted by all who study house types and distribution.

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Documenting America, 1935–1943. Edited by Carl Fleischhauer and Beverly W. Brannan. Essays by Lawrence W. Levine and Alan Trachtenberg. (Berkeley: University of California Press, in association with the Library of Congress, 1988. Pp. xi, 361. Notes, illustrations, appendix, tables, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$60.00; paperbound, \$24.95.)

A remarkable social document was created by photographers working for a federal agency founded during the depths of the Great Depression and active through the gearing up of the industrial war effort. Beginning in 1935 as the Historical Section of the Resettlement Administration, the agency's mission was to inform the public of the plight of the rural poor and to document Resettlement's efforts to improve the circumstances of this "submerged third" of the population. Resettlement and its programs were absorbed by the Farm Security Administration (Department of Agriculture) in 1937, and the photographic staff was transferred to the Office of War Information in 1943 and allowed to wither.

Throughout their mission, the work of the photographers was guided by their able director, Roy Emerson Stryker, a Columbia economics instructor, who expanded his initial charge and guided the photographers in a continuing project aimed at fulfilling his dream of a comprehensive visual encyclopedia of American life. The resultant files have been housed at the Library of Congress since 1943 as the FSA/OWI Collection. Although short of a total realization of Stryker's dream, these files are a national treasure. The extent to which this has been recognized can be gauged by leafing through Penelope Dixon's *Photographers of the Farm Security Administration: An Annotated Bibliography* (1983), which requires fully 250 pages to record all that has been published about, or has made use of, the FSA photographs.

The FSA/OWI files are also the subject of *Documenting America*, which is far more than the fiftieth-anniversary tribute it purports to be. The book, edited by Carl Fleischhauer and Beverly W. Brannan, is an indispensable guide for the researcher who uses the files and is a very thorough and accessible introduction for the general reader. It avoids the heavy emphasis, so characteristic of earlier works, on the photographers as artists/personalities. It instead presents the photographs themselves in a new way—perhaps

closer to Stryker's own intentions—and corrects a number of factual errors which, made early on, have been endlessly repeated.

The editors have chosen to reproduce single, complete assignments recorded by each of the principal photographers. An example is the fourteen-print selection from a series by Gordon Parks entitled "Ella Watson, U.S. Government Charwoman." Only one photograph from this series has heretofore been widely published (a close-up of Watson and her broom against an American flag background), and while it is an arresting image, alone it gives no hint of the details of a life that can be viewed when the entire series is examined. The point made is that the hit-the-high-spots approach of most earlier works on the FSA photographs results in misconceptions about the nature of the work and of its real value as a source of historical information.

An assessment of this value is made in the opening essays by Lawrence W. Levine and Alan Trachtenberg. The best, however, is saved for last. At the back of the book is a wonderful essay in which the authors describe not only the FSA/OWI files' content and arrangement, but also their assembly and reorganization by the Library of Congress. Thanks to this essay, future researchers will know much more about what they can expect to encounter when working with the files. The authors reveal, for instance, that their detailed count puts the size of the file at only about half the figure most commonly cited. Even so, there appears to be a vast amount of material not previously dealt with by historians. *Documenting America* is an important work for anyone interested in documentary photography. It is an essential one for scholars interested in the history captured by the FSA/OWI photographers.

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Iowa History and Culture: A Bibliography of Materials Published Between 1952 and 1986. Compiled by Patricia Dawson and David Hudson. (Ames: State Historical Society of Iowa, in association with Iowa State University Press, 1989. Pp. xiii, 356. Indexes. \$34.95.)

Compiled by two Iowa librarians, this bibliography both supplements and expands upon William Petersen's *Iowa History Reference Guide* (1952), covering the broader culture—as well as the history—of the Hawkeye state. The book is divided into several major sections: general histories, regional and local history, biography and autobiography, and subject histories. Excluded are genealogies, newspaper articles, manuscripts, and audio-visual materials. There are excellent personal name and subject indexes, and entries