

and whether some kind of explanatory theory of modernization can be applied to this period of exceptional international migration. The answer to both questions is negative. Nugent finds little in the American experience that differs from that of other Atlantic World countries, aside from an abundance of available agricultural land, and he finds various notions of modernization too vague to be helpful in synthesizing the migration experience.

*Crossings* is organized into three sections. The first describes the Atlantic World of the late nineteenth century, with special emphasis on its overall demographic and migrational features. The second treats emigration in each of the major donor countries and regions of Europe—Britain (England-Wales and Scotland), Ireland, Scandinavia, the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Russia, Italy, and Iberia. The third examines the four major receiving nations—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, and the United States. Each of the national treatments takes the form of an essay that sums up facts from the best and most recent migration studies, provides basic statistical data, and notes differences and similarities with other national experiences.

Nugent's book is valuable for its grand perspective. While the notion that the distinction between emigration and immigration is artificial and that the migration experience is best seen as international and transatlantic has been around for some time, few have tried to write migration history on this scale. At the same time, its ambitiousness can cause it to be less than satisfying. It is a grand synthesis, and as such it can pay only limited attention to detail. Thus the regional specialist, like this reviewer, may appreciate the larger effort but find the short essay (*i.e.*, all of Britain in five pages, all of Scandinavia in eight pages) on his or her particular nation or region of interest to be wanting. An interesting feature is the large number of original maps by the historical geographer, Norman Pounds, many of which are useful.

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*Homes in the Heartland: Balloon Frame Farmhouses of the Upper Midwest, 1850–1920.* By Fred W. Peterson. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992. Pp. xi, 296. Illustrations, figures, table, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of balloon frame construction, which revolutionized building technology and facilitated settlement of the Midwest from the 1850s on. For a period of seventy years, it was practically the only way to construct farmhouses in the region. Subject to the availability of

milled lumber of standard dimensions, mass-produced nails, and a modular formula for putting the pieces together, a carpenter with one helper could construct a simple 14-by-20-foot, one-story house in one week. By comparison, the traditional mortise-and-tenon method required a skilled housewright and crew of at least four or five men to raise a box frame of heavy timbers. Not only did the balloon frame save construction time, it also negated the time-consuming drying and seasoning of large posts and beams; furthermore, the same size house could be built at a savings of about 40 percent.

Generally accepted to have been “invented” in Chicago in the early 1830s, influence of the balloon frame in Indiana could be expected to correlate to the state’s proximity to the source. Although Indiana is not included in the five states of the Upper Midwest surveyed in this book, a casual glance at the photos and plans will reveal their close relationship to Indiana’s agrarian architecture. The only Hoosier cited in the book is pioneer farmer and entrepreneur Solon Robinson, who was the author of the earliest published explanation of the balloon frame in the *American Agriculturalist* of 1846. His plan for “A Cheap Farm House” indicates that he apparently had little practical experience in the matter.

It is obvious that Peterson’s work is based on comprehensive fieldwork and primary research in the diaries and letters of settlers. Firsthand accounts of the construction of a log or sod house—subsistence shelters that gave way to the balloon frame—are fascinating, especially when supplemented by rare photos, such as of the interior of a sod house. Early on, however, the author sets up a false dichotomy between architectural history and the study of vernacular architecture. He develops his own artificial system of ten farmhouse types, ignoring the fact that the houses being built in Midwestern towns and villages were not appreciably different from the farmhouses. The typology soon becomes tedious, distracting from all the good material presented.

The first chapter on the balloon frame’s structural system, which gives a good explanation of frame parts with all their dimensions, is the best part of the book. The four-foot standard length of lath determined the basic module upon which the entire structure is based; this helps to explain many proportional conventions that survive to the present day, such as our standard thirty-inch-wide doors.

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