

familiar sites, such as the Ruthmere mansion in Elkhart and the Colonel William Jones State Historic Site in Gentryville. Most areas of Indiana are represented, with the bulk of twentieth-century buildings drawn from northern counties.

The best essay is the beautifully focused treatment of the Culbertson Mansion State Historic Site in New Albany; the most difficult is the search for meaning in the decisions made by the architects of the current State Capitol building. The text concentrates on the most important individual or family associated with each building, and the resulting capsules are as incisive, skeptical, and entertaining as their subjects. Most essays include brief recognition of the various preservation groups that have secured and maintained these properties.

Their great variety invites us to review the processes by which we have made, and in the future might make, the decisions to select sites to preserve. Boomhower's selections show a preference for dissenters and eccentrics, writers and artists, politicians and entrepreneurs. The essays remind us that personal associations, rather than historical context, have driven much of the Hoosier preservation scene. Thus they challenge us to ask if we will bring a similar set of attitudes, historical and aesthetic, to the post-World War II built environment as we approach the bicentennial of Indiana's statehood.

Readers eager to gain a sense of the buildings themselves will be delighted by the eight-to-ten color photographs from Darryl Jones that accompany each essay. Jones is the preeminent local color photographer of Indiana in this generation, and many of the features that distinguish his work are apparent here. In particular, watch his use of both natural and artificial light to evoke the particular effects of shadow, texture, and context sought by the architects and decorators of these sites. Note also his simulation of earlier processes of illustration, from studio art to postcards, as visual linkages to affirm the ties of past and present. Jones's photos and Boomhower's sprightly text make *Destination Indiana* a good introduction to Hoosier historical tourism.

GEORGE W. GEIB is distinguished professor of liberal arts at Butler University, Indianapolis, and immediate past president of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission.

The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History. Edited by Andrew R. L. Cayton and Susan E. Gray. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp. vii, 251. Map, notes, index. \$35.00.)

This recent addition to the *Midwestern History and Culture* series, published by Indiana University Press, brings together ten essays originally presented before the "Writing Regionally: Historians Talk about the Middle West" conference held at Miami University in 1998. Two related themes animate these essays: a historical

dialogue that clarifies recent thinking about the Midwest as a region and an experimental subtext that explores the relationships between writing history and personal experience. The first addresses those with specific interests in the Midwest and regional identity, but the second opens a rarely discussed aspect of scholarly work that has much broader significance. Indeed, this tentative attempt to broach the subject of personal motivations for writing history is the most remarkable aspect of this collection.

Central to all the essays is an effort to redefine the Midwest as a mental construct, that is, to demonstrate how the various peoples of the region have identified themselves in terms of a particular landscape over the past two centuries. This approach, grounded in the new social history that has dominated historiography for the past several decades, is one way of coming to terms with the diversity and internal contradictions of a region that has traditionally been defined in terms of objective criteria that emphasized only centralizing tendencies.

Kathleen Neils Conzen's essay on the ransacking of Jane Grey Swisshelm's Minnesota newspaper office in 1858 is perhaps the best example of this approach. Conzen argues that this episode should be interpreted in the context of a larger public debate about the social, cultural, and political identity of frontier Minnesota. Swisshelm and her Yankee supporters struggled to impress Protestant moralism upon an unwilling collection of German Catholics, French Canadians, Winnebagos, and local Democratic territorial officials. Even though Swisshelm and her allies may have prevailed in helping to define the Midwest, pockets of dissenters, like those in northern Minnesota, continued to challenge the region's Yankee hegemony.

The second theme springs more from personal than professional concerns, as the authors forthrightly admit in their introduction, and for that reason it may be the more controversial aspect of this collection. All of the contributors are self-defined midwesterners whose personal identities are intimately bound up in varying degrees with historical interests in their home region. The editors encouraged them to discuss their own midwestern experiences in the context of their scholarly work. Not all of the contributors were willing to make this part of their work explicit, but those who did raise some important issues about inspiration and insight in historical writing.

Contributor Mary Neth, for example, grew up on a Missouri farm and has written about preserving family farms in the early twentieth century in the face of growing agribusiness. This should not be surprising, as many historians choose subjects that are directly or indirectly related to their own background. Neth heard family stories about farming while growing up and was nurtured in the pastoralism of midwestern wholesomeness, self-sufficiency, independence, and egalitarianism. Yet she was also aware of the region's penchant for conservatism, intolerance, and a diversity that belied the popular image of regional homogeneity. These contradictory images

ingrained from personal experience have informed her research and provided particular insights, passions, and an awareness of deeper issues that have undoubtedly made her work more compelling and convincing.

Much the same can be said for the other contributors, indeed for all historians who draw upon their deep well of personal experience, whether or not they are conscious of doing so or care to admit it. The difference here is that these connections are made more explicit than is commonly the case. The editors and participants in this experiment have taken a risk, as many historians may be uncomfortable with the notion that their personal lives are so much a part of their scholarly endeavors. Yet as this collection demonstrates, the resulting history is richer and more honest for revealing all of the sources of the historical imagination, not just those that can be placed in footnotes.

EMIL POCOCK grew up in Maryland and teaches early U.S. history and American Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic. He pursues research interests in the social and cultural development of the midwestern frontier.

Women Building Chicago, 1790–1990: A Biographical Dictionary.

Edited by Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp. lxi, 1088. Illustrations, introduction, [historical survey], sources, index. \$75.00.)

Women Building Chicago, 1790–1990: A Biographical Dictionary is the collective effort of the Chicago Area Women's History Conference and its Historical Encyclopedia of Chicago Women Project. Two principal editors, Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast—both senior research associates at the Center for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Illinois Chicago—assisted by six associate editors and a ten-member editorial board commissioned and assembled the entries.

Most of the women whose biographies are included in *Women Building Chicago* are rarely included in standard biographical dictionaries and often are familiar only to specialists in Chicago women's history. The editors, however, see this volume as more than a standard presentation of information. They envision a "synthesis of Chicago history that provides the beginnings of a new narrative . . . for understanding the growth and development" of the city (p. xix). This volume succeeds admirably in reaching this goal. It identifies women who lived *in* the city, but more than that, it depicts how Chicago women were *of* the city: their lives and work have been an integral component of Chicago's growth that scholars have too long ignored.

To accomplish this broader aim, *Women Building Chicago* has a superb introduction that gives historical context to its 423 entries. Schultz wrote the introduction but acknowledges that the "major