

BOOK REVIEWS

Buildings of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania. By GEORGE E. THOMAS, with PATRICIA LIKOS RICCI, RICHARD J. WEBSTER, LAWRENCE M. NEWMAN, ROBERT JANOSOV, and BRUCE THOMAS. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011. 696 pp. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. \$75.)

Buildings of Pennsylvania: Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. By LU DONNELLY, H. DAVID BRUMBLE IV, and FRANKLIN TOKER. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010. 656 pp. Illustrations, drawings, maps. \$75.)

The Buildings of the United States series, inspired by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's landmark Buildings of England series, is an ambitious undertaking of the Society of Architectural Historians. The two volumes dedicated to Pennsylvania, of the more than sixty projected for the series, are representative of what William H. Pierson envisioned for the entirety—a comprehensive history of the major representative buildings and types in the American experience. The principal authors of these volumes bring together talented colleagues to examine the surviving architectural legacy of Pennsylvania and how this record contributes to our understanding both of the commonwealth's collective history and of what Pennsylvania contributed to the nation.

As is true of other books in the BUS series, there is a familiar structure to each volume: a lengthy introduction followed by specific analysis of regions, counties, and important buildings within each county. *Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania* covers Philadelphia, the inner counties (Bucks, Montgomery, and Delaware), and four regions defined by geography and cultural traditions: the Piedmont (Northampton, Lehigh, Berks, Lancaster, Lebanon, Dauphin, York, Cumberland, Adams, and Franklin Counties); Blue Mountain and the Northern Tier (Northumberland, Union, Snyder, Perry, Juniata, and Mifflin Counties); the anthracite region (Schuylkill, Carbon, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Columbia, and Montour Counties); and the Northern Tier and Poconos (Monroe, Pike, Wayne, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Bradford, Sullivan, Tioga, and Lycoming Counties). The book's discussion generally flows from east to west and south to north, with cities, townships, and villages within each county listed alphabetically.

Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, which covers thirty-one counties, takes Pittsburgh and Allegheny County as its focal point, then looks outward to the surrounding counties that form the Allegheny Plateau (Beaver, Washington, Greene, Fayette, Westmoreland, Indiana, Armstrong, and Butler). The authors

also explore three other south-central regions: the valley and ridge system (Cambria, Somerset, Bedford, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Blair Counties); Great Forest, a plateau area in north-central western Pennsylvania (Warren, Forest, Clarion, Jefferson, Clearfield, Clinton, Cameron, Potter, Elk, and McKean Counties); and the stepped river plain adjacent to Lake Erie (Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Lawrence, and Venango Counties).

Each volume begins with a useful introduction. Thomas's guide to the eastern Pennsylvania volume is notable for its sharp analysis of how quickly William Penn's visions for his commonwealth were thwarted, as well as how Quaker hegemony retreated to the sidelines in the 1750s. Major themes Thomas presents include the unique (for colonial America) demographic diversity of eastern Pennsylvania, which was reflected in its architecture; how transportation innovation spread taste as well as building materials; and how industrialization changed building practices and design from a local or regional expression grounded in ethnicity and culture to a more cosmopolitan emphasis. He regrets that this innovative spirit gave way to a nostalgic colonialism in the aftermath of the centennial. Thomas's introduction has an elegiac dimension, as it celebrates the tradition of innovation, long since lost and harks back to the enterprising spirit that once placed Philadelphia and eastern Pennsylvania at the forefront of American national, industrial, and cultural aspirations. It also enables him to lament the loss of Victor Gruen's dreadful design for Lancaster Square in Lancaster, which replaced two blocks of historic buildings with a modernist structure totally inappropriate to the cityscape and failed to attract the retail tenants its developer promised. No citizen of Lancaster I have met shed a tear when the remnants of Lancaster Square were razed.

Donnelly's introduction to *Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania* follows much the same script—patterns of settlement, transportation, industrialization, deindustrialization, and suburbanization—though she pays more attention to the Native peoples of the region and how a different dynamic occurred among the diverse peoples of western Pennsylvania, resulting in what Donnelly terms a “stylistic crossroads” as second- and third-generation settlers transformed cultural traditions to create a synthesis of building practices different from, if not more innovative than, what was occurring simultaneously in the eastern half of the commonwealth (9).

The two *Buildings of Pennsylvania* volumes are books to read through, take on the road, and treasure. Each not only presents information about significant buildings designed by famous architects but also adds to our understanding of how much vernacular architecture and engineering have contributed to the built legacy of the commonwealth.

Thomas's eastern Pennsylvania volume contains a number of mistakes, including dating the beginning the James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking series to 1826, three years after *The Pioneers* was first published, and stating that

the new college gymnasium was located behind, rather than to the north of, the College Building at Franklin & Marshall College. I could add more, but the assertion that the Centennial Exposition in Fairmount Park was the “greatest popular event of the century” (21) is a colossal blunder; 27.5 million people attended the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, three times the number who ventured to Philadelphia seventeen years earlier—and, of course, the White City had a profound impact on American architecture and planning for a generation to come. Donnelly attests to the significance of the Columbian Exposition in *Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania*, both in the numerous Beaux Arts–style buildings erected in the aftermath of the fair and in the development of the Oakland section of Pittsburgh (66–67). Donnelly, though, errs in describing Daniel H. Burnham as “chief architect of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893” (53), a remarkable claim considering that Burnham did not design a single building for the fair. Frederick Law Olmsted and his young partner Henry Sargent Codman did the site planning, and Burnham coordinated design and construction as director of works.

These two volumes devoted to buildings of Pennsylvania are important and welcome. I regret one decision made by the Society of Architectural Historians at the outset of the project—to concentrate on extant buildings. In a way, this makes sense; I’ve often looked for buildings to photograph that had long since been razed. But given the amount of demolition that has taken place over the last century, focusing only on surviving buildings necessarily omits a significant part of our architectural history. Nevertheless, what the authors have accomplished in these books is commendable; they should take justifiable pride in what they have accomplished in documenting the history of architects and builders whose legacy is ours to cherish.

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Ulster to America: The Scots-Irish Migration Experience, 1680–1830. Edited by WARREN J. HOFSTRA. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012. 296 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$45.)

This volume consists of eleven pieces about one of the most numerically and culturally significant immigrant populations in colonial and early independence America. Written by academic stars in Scots-Irish studies, the essays that editor Warren Hofstra has selected yield a new, luminous constellation. The text removes us from a “broad brushstroke” understanding of the Ulster people of Lowland Scottish ancestry who settled in North America in numbers estimated at 150 thousand for the period 1680–1830. A more subtle and nuanced appreciation of the group’s composite, adaptable character is the book’s gift and achieve-