effort in Pittsburgh at this time. It is possible that by 1860 abolitionist activity in the Pittsburgh area had largely died out, but there is reason to believe that an abolitionist convention was held in Allegheny County in the spring of 1862, and since the Philadelphia Press is the only non-abolitionist newspaper in Pennsylvania that McPherson appears to have consulted, it seems likely that the abolitionist movement in western Pennsylvania is a subject to which he might appropriately have devoted some attention.

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All art emerges from history, not vice versa. So elemental a statement is a platitude, a premise so necessary that the repetition here would be totally redundant, were it not for the fact that all too often nowadays, art history has become an end in itself. Many of those who cultivate so assiduously the far branches of the art historical tree should consider that if they neglect the soil in which the trunk is rooted, they labor in vain. The author of this book needs no such advice; he has placed his buildings and his furniture firmly in their historical background.

"American architecture and furniture," Dr. Gowans states in his preface, "may be read as a living and tangible record of the course of American civilization." In searching for the patterns peculiar to the development of form and style in both architecture and furniture, he feels that the record of such patterns leads to the knowledge of history and that to know history is to know humanity. That he begins with history and ends with it, recommends his book with singular propriety to review in these pages.

There were no full-dress histories of American architecture to review before Lewis Mumford published his Sticks and Stones in 1924, although various phases of the subject had been chronicled, notably in such studies as Fiske Kimball’s Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (1922). But thoughtful and observant as was Mumford’s slender book (a revised edition was issued in 1955), a large comprehensive view of American architecture was
impossible then because large segments of our national building heritage were not only little known, but also inadequately researched. Since that time our fund of knowledge has been steadily growing (witness Dr. Gowans' footnotes), and several lengthy general histories have appeared in recent years. That of Dr. Gowans is the latest, and in some ways, the most comprehensive.

It is certainly the first in this reviewer's experience to ally furniture so closely with architecture. The time is past when such a juxtaposition might be deemed frivolous, and Dr. Gowans' adroit and vastly knowledgeable handling of his subsidiary theme is exemplary. If William Blake could see a world in a grain of sand, there is no reason why the art historian may not see the stuff of history in a chair leg. The reader merely asks that the leg not be required to bear too much; Dr. Gowans, it must be said, sits very gracefully upon his chairs. As an example, his treatment of the mutations of the perennial "Windsor" chair makes very interesting reading.

Something of the style, the format, and the method of treatment had already appeared in a previous book of the author's — Looking at Architecture in Canada (Toronto, 1948). In the present volume, as in the earlier, the shape is square and the text double-columned, the style is easy and informal, carrying its learning lightly, but both the bulk and the method of treatment have been much augmented in the book under review.

Through his knowledge of the history of the 17th and 18th centuries, Dr. Gowans is possessed of a special insight into the process by which American buildings and furniture were produced. He rightly makes the point that the Stone Age, a very primitive level of existence, lasted as long as there were any pioneers; his discussion of medieval survivals in the Colonies (first extensively noticed by Lewis Mumford) is thorough; and the brilliant manner in which he shows the connection between architecture and the colonial policies of France, Spain, and Great Britain is one of the good things in the book. Perhaps he is at his best in describing the influence of the classical tradition on the founding of our country, and the steady decay and attrition of that tradition in the first half of the 19th century.

He chronicles the rise of industrialism and romanticism in America, and the way in which they shaped buildings, furniture and our ever expanding cities. The period between 1850 and 1900 in this country has long been a dark forest aesthetically, whatever it may be historically, and only within the last generation have art historians begun to blaze paths through it. Possibly, it will never be completely
charted, but Dr. Gowans, supported by much recent scholarship, has made a good try.

In discussing the emerging concept of an "original" American architecture exemplified in the work of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the "progressive" men of their time, he pays just and long overdue tribute to the craftsmen who made their achievements possible. The author rightly notes the survival of late Victorian eclecticism in the 1920's and he gives an absorbing account of the rise of Modernism in this country since 1929.

Physically the book is not unpleasant, but this reviewer admits to a prejudice against double columns. The illustrations are good and well chosen, but the presence of large blocks of explanatory captions make the book difficult to read; one has to hunt from page to page for his "place" in the text.

Dr. Gowans has ably demonstrated how history has shown itself in American architecture, but one is always left with the question of just how American it is. On the last page of his text, the author has a note of skepticism about American potentialities, but we prefer to take Dr. Gowans in the text itself, at the top of his stride — "But perhaps the answer is . . . that an 'American style,' if there is one, must be sought not in the realm of the forms but in spirit. What is American about architecture in the United States is in fact precisely that spirit of eager experimentation which we see at its best in the mid 20th century — the conscious, continuous, restless search for new ideas and new expressions that proceed from life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in a free society."

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JAMES D. VAN TRUMP


With the aid of a grant from the Council on Library Resources, Inc., a project has been conducted to determine the status of archives in each of the fifty states of the Federal Union and its territories, with the purpose of measuring their attainments against a set of realistic standards. The result of this project is Dr. Ernst Posner's comprehensive book entitled American State Archives. The opening chapter gives an account of the beginnings of state archives in this country. This is followed by the largest section of the book which contains in-