

*Historic Buildings of Centre County, Pennsylvania.* The Historic Registration Project of the Centre County Library, George Ramsey, Coordinator. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980. Pp. x, 222. Preface, introduction, glossary, bibliography, credits, index. \$15.00.)

In its architecture no less than its politics, Pennsylvania divides east and west. The late-Georgian mansions of Philadelphia and the industrial architecture of Pittsburgh constitute the two great architectural lodes of the Keystone State. Unfortunately, great buildings do not automatically generate great or even adequate scholarship, as anyone who has ever looked for a detailed architectural history of Western Pennsylvania after 1850 can attest. Conversely, a handsome publication can go far to raise the status of even a banal environment.

Centre County has significantly upgraded the value of its building inventory with the publication of this descriptive account, an outgrowth of its Historic Registration Project of 1976. The book is handsomely printed and bound, and sensitively photographed by Alison Taggart. Its organization into four geographic areas, subdivided by towns or rural monuments, is clear enough, although inevitably the sequence of buildings is much more staccato to an outside reader than it would be to the book's editors, to whom every scene is familiar.

The organizers of the book show a concern for general physical contexts, along with the "star" buildings in that district. Numerous city plans document the state of the towns in 1874, though the reader is left to guess at later patterns of growth or decay. Unfortunately, the book slights the importance of the social context which once wove a different sort of fabric around these buildings. There is throughout an intelligent approach to social factors, availability of materials, and design prototypes as influences on architectural style, but the question of urban development is never addressed beyond a superficial level.

Ultimately it is the number of towns and sites covered that forces the text and photographs to "cover" rather than to investigate the building history of Centre County. There is no dearth at all of remarkable buildings, from Queen Anne mansions to a "moderne" theater, but the text can only stop to make a passing generality on each. The inclusion of only one building plan in the book precludes any understanding of the buildings beyond their facades.

In short, the study forces us to acknowledge that there are more buildings worth seeing in Centre County than one would have sus-

pected. But rather than whet our appetite to search these buildings out, or even to study them further, this study discourages our interest through its own marked lack of curiosity about its architectural heritage.

*Department of Fine Arts  
University of Pittsburgh  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

FRANKLIN K. TOKER

IN COMMEMORATION  
GIFT  
IN MEMORY OF  
WALTER MORGAN  
FROM  
THE WILLIAM MITCHELL FAMILY AND AMELIA HOPP