

Harker's Courthouses: Visions of an Iowa Icon

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played a key role in uncovering Hull's deception by compiling evidence about his visit to Iowa. When sculptors Frederick Mohrmann and Henry Salle published their confession in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in February 1870, Hull's fraud was completely unmasked and his already dubious reputation was irreparably tarnished.

A Colossal Hoax recounts in detail the creation of the Cardiff Giant and the ensuing debate that it provoked. The book situates the debate amid the broad political, economic, religious, scientific, and cultural contexts of nineteenth-century America. In Tribble's readable and thoughtful account, George Hull's spectacular, short-lived fraud reveals a great deal about American culture in an era in which frauds of all sorts abounded, and in which Americans dared to question the truthfulness of both revealed religion and modern science.

Harker's Courthouses: Visions of an Iowa Icon, photographs by Michael P. Harker, introduction by Loren N. Horton. Cedar Rapids: WDG Publishing, 2009. x, 83 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$28.95 paper.

Reviewer Cameron Campbell is associate professor of architecture at Iowa State University. He did the photography for *A Century of Iowa Architecture, 1900–1999* (2004).

Iowa's courthouses epitomize the romantic notion of small, proud towns from a bygone era. They are also a topic of much interest for those who travel the state and discover these rare jewels dotting the Iowa landscape. Michael P. Harker has captured these remarkable treasures in *Harker's Courthouses*. The black-and-white images photographed by Harker accentuate the rich detail of courthouses from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. The book presents whole-building photographs as well as detail vignettes to tell the visual story of these buildings.

Natives of Iowa as well as visitors will appreciate the artful documentation that Harker's photographs provide. He organizes his journey across the state alphabetically by county, showing only those county courthouses that exemplify well-crafted courthouses from this period. The book is neither a critical text nor a historical account save for the brief introduction by Loren N. Horton. The introduction serves to ignite readers' interest in this building type and provides the context in which these buildings were designed. Ultimately, though, this is a picture book that allows readers to share in the awe for splendid Iowa courthouse architecture from 1840 to 1940 — the heyday of well-crafted courthouses.