

Memories of a Farm Kitchen

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Narber employs an impressive array of archival and secondary sources to elucidate the circumstances undergirding Iowa mural projects, as copious footnotes attest. For this fact alone, *Murals of Iowa* will be a boon to future scholarship. Numerous illustrations also enhance the visual appeal and scholarly weight of this book by providing a visual record of Iowa murals unprecedented in print to date.

Nonspecialists interested in Iowa art will appreciate the author's conversational tone, lucid explanations of art historical terminology and iconography, and occasional popular culture references. Narber is at his best when discussing lesser-known New Deal murals, such as the intriguing and controversial mural at the Cedar Rapids courthouse and the contemporary murals sponsored by Principal Financial Group. His intimate knowledge of these latter artworks stems from his tenure with the company's art purchasing program, and his fluid writing reflects a clear appreciation of and comfort with these subjects.

Murals in Iowa is not perfect, however. Narber at times sacrifices his authorial voice and narrative focus in an effort to compile a complete record of political, social, and cultural histories. His heavy reliance on block quotations from primary and secondary sources attests to the breadth of research underpinning this book, but these passages are not always used to best effect, especially when they replace Narber's own capable visual analysis, and the frequency with which they occur tends to disrupt the master narrative.

Nonetheless, *Murals of Iowa* is a welcome addition to the small but growing literature on Iowa murals, which remain relatively unknown to scholars and Iowa residents alike. Narber proposes and demonstrates that our lack of awareness is the greatest risk to Iowa murals today. His book brings to our attention a rich and diverse constellation of Iowa art and challenges us to enlarge our cultural heritage beyond the works of a single artist or even a single decade. Filled with delightful images and local anecdotes that will appeal to a wide range of readers interested in Iowa culture, *Murals of Iowa* provides an accessible and highly informative survey of Iowa murals that will help to correct that neglect.

Memories of a Farm Kitchen, by Bob Artley and Rob Artley. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 2010. 95 pp. 38 recipes, illustrations. \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewer Jill M. Nussel is a lecturer at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. In her research and writing, she has used cookbooks to shed light on immigrants and their communities. She is completing a book manuscript, "From Stewpot to Melting Pot: Charity Cookbooks in America's Heartland."

When I first looked at Bob Artley's *Memories of a Farm Kitchen*, I was skeptical that this book could add to a scholarly narrative. After all, nearly half the pages are recipes. There are no photographs, just illustrations and watercolor paintings of the author's memories of his childhood separated by over 80 years of time and space. But after reading his folksy narrative, I am happy to report that I was wrong. It is an excellent addition to scholarly inquiry.

Bob Artley is the long-retired editorial cartoonist for the now defunct *Des Moines Tribune* and has illustrated several farm-related children's books and may be best known for his syndicated cartoon (and book collection), *Memories of a Former Kid*. In *Memories of a Farm Kitchen*, he recounts his childhood and teen years spent on the family farm near Hampton, Iowa. Born in 1917, Artley spent the 1920s and Great Depression years in the home built by his grandfather in 1912. Here we see this kitchen as the heart of not only his family home but also of a child's universe. The kitchen served as a center for all things on the farm: chores, food preparation, the laundry, thresher dinners, a place to write letters, and even a place of worship.

The book is remarkable for its vivid detail about the items in the kitchen, its functional layout, and the author's folksy description of the activities that took place there. We meet Artley's parents: the father who threshed wheat, butchered animals, and hauled ice to the icebox; the mother who toiled over a washtub, canned meats and vegetables, prepared countless meals, and then cleaned up afterward, who also used the kitchen as a place where she wrote countless letters to far-flung family and made buckets of popcorn to ease the stress of homework.

In Iowa during the first decades of the last century, food storage could mean the difference between eating and starvation. Artley explains that the roads outside his family's farm were often too snow-covered in the winter or too muddy in the spring to go into town. Months of separation from a grocery store meant the family lived on what was gathered and preserved from the previous harvest. The Artleys did not have a smokehouse, but we see his father working at a table in the cellar rubbing the hams with hickory-flavored salt. Readers are introduced to the intricacies of sausage making, preserving meats and vegetables, separating cream, and rendering lard.

The book's drawings and watercolors are certainly interesting even at first glance, but I was not originally convinced of their utility for scholarship. However, the drawings demonstrate intricate details of everyday existence that might not be captured by photographs. I doubt that most people kept or even took photos of their laundry and canning facilities. Artley's drawings of the kitchen highlight the most

important features so readers can see the organizational structure of a farmhouse kitchen.

Dorothy Harchanko provides 34 pages of recipes and instructions for everything from lye soap to canning meat to millet biscuits to cookies. In today's world of prepared foods, readers are enriched by the sheer variety of foods created at a time that did not include toasters, microwaves, or refrigeration. The only way to cook was to physically stoke the fire in the stove — a job that fell to Artley and his brothers.

Much of the strength of this book is in what we don't see written, but what we can infer. Iowa farmers faced economic hardships during the 1920s and were particularly hard hit during the Great Depression. But in Artley's memories, we feel little deprivation. Only once does he refer to the stressful times of the Depression. In those difficult times, surely the parents struggled to make ends meet, but instead we see his parents keeping careful ledgers. During the Depression, many families went hungry from time to time. Here we see Father leading the evening prayer, thanking God for their dinner, whereas the very fact that the family had dinner every night was a testament to their own hard work. In fact, the dinners Artley's mother served from the larder — sausage and millet muffins — were some of his favorite meals.

There's yet another story within this story. In 2010, Artley was 93 years old and suffered a series of strokes, so the book was completed by his children and stepchildren. The result is a revealing memoir of life on an Iowa farm during the Great Depression.

Reading Places: Literacy, Democracy and the Public Library in Cold War America, by Christine Pawley. *Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. xi, 325 pp. Tables, notes, appendixes, index. \$80.00 cloth, \$28.95 paper.

Reviewer Joan Bessman Taylor is assistant professor of library and information science at the University of Iowa. Her research and writing have focused on the history of reading and readers and the promotion of reading.

To call Christine Pawley's most recent book-length contribution to print culture studies a case study of Wisconsin's Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration of 1950–1952 is to obfuscate its scope and insight into the creation of official literacy policies and how these intersect with constructions of identity, citizenship, and freedom. It functions on dual dimensions: as a tale of library and reading history in Wisconsin — a history sharing similarities with other midwestern states — and as an argument for historians to conduct what Pawley terms “a middle layer of analysis” examining the organizational con-