Book reviews

Donald Watson & Judith McKay, A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940, Fryer Memorial Library, Occasional Paper No. 5 University of Queensland, St. Lucia, 1984, 236 pages, no price stated.

This directory has been produced as part of Queensland's contribution to the Australian Bicentennial Architecture Project. In this respect it joins other projects of a greater or lesser degree of sophistication being undertaken in other states. Previously, published information exclusively concerning Queensland architects was limited to the Royal Australian Institute of Architects 1959 booklet Buildings of Queensland. As this has been out of print for many years, the present directory is particularly welcome.

The directory is a compact volume of 236 pages, sensibly bound and clearly designed. The logical layout lets individual entries speak for themselves with little editorial interference. Some entries are of only two or three lines, while others run to half a page. A comprehensive bibliography and set of notes on use are included, at once identifying the ground already covered and indicating untapped sources of information.

It is refreshing to see the inclusion of practitioners from a wider range of disciplines than the title would suggest. For once architects are forced to share the historical limelight with surveyors, builders, timber merchants, sanitary engineers, land and real estate agents, 'valuators' and civil engineers. Indeed it could be argued that many of the latter practitioners have had a far more profound influence on our built environment than their conventional architectural colleagues. I particularly liked the entry for D. Bethune of Ipswich, who in 1861 advertised as 'Builder, House Carpenter, Joiner, Glazier, Venetian Blindmaker and Undertaker'. A painted advertisement still to be seen on a shop in Talbot (Victoria) links the trades of building and undertaking, and our understanding of early building trades is greatly aided by publications such as this directory.

Whilst this directory is primarily devoted to Queensland, readers from other states will also find much of local interest. For instance, we can learn of the Queensland experience of John Smith Murdoch, chief government architect for the Commonwealth Public Works Branch, and until recently a neglected and underrated figure. For the Victorian reader, Edwin Evan Smith, John James Clark, Christopher Porter and William Henry Ellerker are represented amongst others, and a similar list could be extracted for each state. Even previously obscure artisans such as Andrea Giovanni Stomboco, mason for St. Patrick's Cathedral at Ballarat, rate an entry, thus filling gaps in local knowledge of such shadowy figures.
The directory is enlivened by the reproduction of many letterheads, advertisements, business cards and caricatures. These will be of special interest to students of typography. The authors conclude with a useful index to country practitioners.

Reviewed by Richard Aitken


The fascination of the Victoria Market stems not only from its historic fabric and unrivalled atmosphere, but from its role as a meeting-place for all walks of life in Melbourne. McCaughey and Hoban's book acknowledges both roles, while providing illuminating information on the market's political history, whose turbulent tone was set from the time of its inception in 1878.

The authors describe the market as a highly successful trading venue, as well as a long-term source of discord between its controlling bodies, the Melbourne City Council and the State Government. Belatedly, they say, it is now also acknowledged as a prime tourist attraction, a role the authorities seem to find more acceptable than its time-honoured function as a provider of inexpensive fresh food. (So under-utilised was the market's tourist potential that in 1978, when Sunday trading was introduced and proved extraordinarily successful, the only postcard of the place that could be located was dated c1890 and held in the La Trobe Library's historic pictures collection!)

There is much of lively interest in this book, from telling photographs of the "market people" and transcripts of their spruiking techniques, to archival material on the astounding high-rise developments proposed during the 1960s and 70s for the huge, centrally-located market site; from personal comment from shoppers and stallholders to details about what is sold at the market, how and why. Rabbit dealers Struan and Pam Chitty, for instance, find their weekly turnover varies from 7,000 pairs of rabbits to 200 pairs, depending on the season, and that their customers range from the elegant 'Two Faces' restaurant in South Yarra to a woman who buys $25 worth to feed stray cats in North Melbourne. This is rewarding social history about an institution that fairly teems with vitality.

Reviewed by Anne Latreille


This publication, one of a series dealing with visual resource management of Victoria's forests, identifies and describes the state's principal landscape character types, explaining how they are established and why they are important. The types range from the plains of the Murray Basin to the coastline (which stretches from some 1200 kilometres, including indentations and off-shore islands, across the length of southern Victoria). The authors define a landscape character type as a broad-scale
authors define a landscape character type as a broad-scale area of land with common distinguishing visual characteristics, arrived at after taking an inventory of the physical landscape and its overall appearance.

The paper then offers a systematic classification of landscape scenic quality, explaining how to measure and map this for the nine principal types as well as for coniferous plantations and agricultural landscapes.

It is attractively produced, with copious illustrative material. The comparative photographs - examples of landscapes showing high, moderate and low scenic quality - give it relevance for the interested lay person as well as for the professionals at which it is aimed.

Reviewed by Anne Latreille

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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MILES LEWIS is an architectural historian at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of Victorian Primitive (1977), Don John of Balaclava (1977) and co-author of The Essential Maldon (1983).

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PETER LOVELL is a building consultant, and a director of the firm of conservation architects Allom Lovell Sanderson Pty. Ltd. He specialises in research and investigation into original decorative treatments of old buildings.