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*Lost Architecture of the Rio Grande Borderlands* (review)

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No wonder Rodríguez reportedly believed these Arkansas sculptures were “his greatest achievement” (81).

Because his was painstaking work, and because it required such intense concentration, Rodríguez’s craft was only as good as his health; by the early 1940s, suffering from diabetes and with failing eyesight, his ability to travel declined and his productivity diminished. He returned to San Antonio’s west side to live in a hollow tree shelter he had built there years earlier, residing within its embrace until his death on December 16, 1955.

In the lavishly illustrated *Capturing Nature*, Dionicio Rodríguez could not have wished for a more fitting memorial.

*Pomona College*

CHAR MILLER

*Lost Architecture of the Rio Grande Borderlands.* By W. Eugene George. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. Pp. 136. Illustrations, color photographs, maps, figures, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781603440110, \$35.00 cloth.)

Gene George has long been associated with architectural historic preservation as both a practicing architect and professor. This book is the culmination of a long-standing “affair” with South Texas Hispanic architecture. This book has two main purposes. The first is to summarize and evaluate the results that Falcon Dam has had on an entire Mexican town and numerous historic sites inundated on the Texas side of the river a half-century earlier. And second, to document the elements of Spanish and Mexican architecture that persisted both before and after the dam’s (both the author and this reviewer are too polite to use here the homonym of the latter word) water rose to obliterate or hide them.

George recounts his personal involvement in recording the built environment of the Falcon Dam area beginning in 1961. After an assignment to measure the historic Alamo buildings was derailed, he and his assistants published archaeological field studies made of the South Texas area to be flooded by the dam. These records included work performed as early as the mid 1930s as well as sketches, measurements, architectural details, photographs, and genealogical information recorded by investigators prior to the flooding created by the dam. George and his team enriched the earlier investigations by interviewing residents and local historians, performing archival research, and identifying and measuring new sites. It was not until 1975, however, that the results were published in *Historic Architecture of Texas: The Falcón Reservoir*. The present book completes George’s documentation of his evolution of apprentice to master of the vernacular architecture of South Texas.

The author is succinct in juxtaposing the past with the present. The author illustrates his points with vintage black-and-white images, his own color photographs, and line drawings made by his assistants or himself. These illustrations are, quite simply, magnificent. Their clarity is matched by the concise prose and lucid commentary. Throughout George writes with an undertone of quiet indignation that, in the name of progress and postwar optimism, Falcon Dam submerged thousands of years of indigenous and more than two-hundred years of Hispanic habita-

tion. The Spanish settlement of Revilla (now Guerrero Viejo) founded in 1750, which became a bustling late nineteenth-century entrepôt, was for a long time almost totally underwater. As a result of droughts, a second dam built upriver, and greater demands on the water, the lake level receded to such a degree that by the 1980s, the central plaza and several blocks of the town were once again visible. But as if the water had not been enough, scavengers removed architectural elements from the exposed *villa* for personal use and gain.

George is sensitive to the persistence of memory and of the families who have been bereft of their ancestral hometown. In the introduction, Ricardo Paz-Treviño, one of these descendants, writes poignantly, "Just as surely as the water crept up the sides of homes, church, school, and shops, just as certainly as the few possessions left behind floated away and were swept down the Rio Grande's winding course to the Gulf of Mexico, the soul of Revilla/Guerrero Viejo was relegated to the memories of those who had known it" (xi). In 1953, when I was a youngster, I recall visiting cousins who had fled the old county seat of Zapata, which had flooded unexpectedly due to extraordinary rains. With the naiveté of youth, we happily went wading along a new shoreline at the end of an old paved highway. Even though we had to be careful not to cut ourselves on broken bottles, rusty bottle caps, and barbed wire, we enjoyed the outing. Only much later would we realize the bruises that we and our families would endure, since we had been cut off from our ancestral home.

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ADÁN BENAVIDES

*Legacies of Camelot: Stewart and Lee Udall, American Culture, and the Arts.* By L. Boyd Finch. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. Pp. 208. Illustrations, notes, index. ISBN: 9780806138794, \$24.95 cloth.)

From poet Robert Frost's recitation at the inauguration to Jacqueline Kennedy's wistful evocation of Camelot in the weeks following her husband's assassination, a public focus on the arts reached its zenith during the presidency of John F. Kennedy. Yet unknown to the general public, much of the impetus for the promotion of the arts during those years came not from the East Coast intellectuals in the Kennedys near orbit but from a blunt-spoken Arizona Mormon named Stewart Udall. Udall's contributions to American arts and letters during the 1960s in the subject of *Legacies of Camelot*.

The Udalls came to Washington in 1955 upon Stewart's election to the House of Representatives; their home in McLean, Virginia, quickly became known for its stunning collection of southwestern art and sculpture. An avid reader and amateur poet, Udall used his stature as a congressman to introduce himself to some of the living legends of American literature—among them Robert Frost, whom he suggested as a speaker for Kennedy's inauguration in 1960.

Udall was tagged by Kennedy to run the sprawling Department of the Interior, a position Udall dubbed "Secretary of Things in General." Diving in with his customary gusto, in nine years in office he established four new national parks, six national monuments, eight seashores and lakeshores, nine recreational sites,