

In the 1880s and 1890s, small farmers and working people in the Ozarks embraced a progressive critique of American society, calling for increases in the power and scope of the federal government in pursuit of 'equal rights to all, and special privileges to none', in the words of one association (p. 19). Their demands included nationalisation of railroads, an end to monopolies, a progressive tax on the wealthy and corporations, and government programmes to help small farmers compete in national markets. Any preconceived notion of an age-old rural conservatism will crumble during Perkins's examination of these earlier populist revolts.

Yet, candidates who rode populist sentiment into office rarely delivered meaningful reforms, and local leaders found ways to use federal power for their own gain, often at the expense of small farmers. Perkins's meticulous research finds struggling farmers-turned-moonshiners battling not G-men from Washington, DC, but a local entrepreneur who recruited federal agents to his prohibition crusade. When a man killed a federal official in charge of the local tick eradication programme in 1922, he turned out to be one of many increasingly desperate smallholders unable to compete in the livestock trade with the prosperous cattlemen who supported costly tick treatments.

No projects were more highly anticipated than a series of dams that boosters claimed would result in flood control, public works jobs, cheap electricity, and long-term economic development, but the majority of the benefits went to prosperous landowners who could litigate for larger government buyouts and business owners located near new tourist destinations. Meanwhile, small farmers were forced off their land for less money, and the temporary construction jobs made little difference in the region's economy.

When the Kennedy and Johnson administrations touted federally assisted economic development and a War on Poverty, hopes in the Ozarks quickly turned to disappointment as funding mostly benefited 'growth centers', which already enjoyed advantages over poorer rural areas. When the War on Poverty sought to circumvent state and local authorities, officeholders turned against it, accusing poverty warriors of subversive activities. With no organised opposition, local conservatives tapped into rural working-class values and forged a new conservative coalition of business leaders, disaffected smallholders, and low-wage workers.

Hillbilly Hellraisers is an important study because it sheds light on the failures of rural reforms that bred discontent. Perkins's detailed investigations uncover highly localised power dynamics, while his century-long scope reveals the broader evolution of resistance to federal power. Perkins boldly draws out lessons for the current moment in his conclusion, urging reformers to understand power on a 'microscopic' level, 'ensure that their programs actually reach the dispossessed populations', and prepare for powerful opposition by having 'an immense, impassioned, and largely airtight democratic front that has its sights locked on the *local* sources of unevenness that affect everyday life' (p. 224).

The Buildings of Ireland: Central Leinster, the Counties of Kildare, Laois and Offaly

Andrew Tierney, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2019, xx + 697 pp. + 127 colour plates, £45, 9780300232042 hb

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The Irish Pevsners have been a long time in the making: the first, by Alistair Rowan (*North-West Ulster*) appeared in 1979, and there have been three others since, by Rowan and Christine Casey

(*North Leinster* (1993)), Casey (*Dublin City* (2005)) and most recently Kevin Mulligan (*South Ulster* (2013)). Now we have *Central Leinster*, and a volume for *Cork* is imminent, bringing the total coverage to around half of the entire island. This volume, by Andrew Tierney, has been worth the wait: it is a splendid, authoritative, thoroughly readable and an immensely scholarly study of the buildings of three central counties (incorporating some material from an earlier survey by Michael O'Neill). Taking the reader from the commuter towns at the edges of Dublin to Offaly's rural hinterland in the lower reaches of the River Shannon, the author introduces us to the history, architecture, art, sculpture – and much more – of a remarkably varied landscape of rolling hills and vast expanses of bog (a full third of Offaly, we learn (p. 3)). Like the best of Pevsner authors, Tierney understands the immutable bond between landscape from architecture. We learn of the ancient timber tracks across the bogs, the canal routes that linked Dublin with the Shannon, and the now rapidly vanishing concrete cooling towers of state-sponsored peat electricity generation – all part of an enmeshed entity of landscape and human endeavour that the author explores with great sensitivity and vivid description.

Scholars of rural history will find much rewarding material here. *Central Leinster* is an overwhelmingly rural Pevsner – the total population of the three counties, heavily concentrated to the east, is less than 400,000 persons, and the largest towns (for there are no cities) are Newbridge and Portlaoise, both of around 23,000 persons. The volume is filled with rich descriptions of castles and tower-houses (about which the author writes with expertise), and the urban and architectural legacy of sixteenth-century plantations (Offaly and Laois were in a former life King's and Queen's counties; Portlaoise was Maryborough). We discover the many interesting survivals of early farm-houses, some still in thatch, as well as a selection of Ireland's finest country houses and estates. All are explained to the reader with deep local knowledge and infective enthusiasm. The ruins of the medieval castle on the dramatic Rock of Dunamase in Laois, for example, are 'best approached . . . on a summer's evening, when the rugged silhouette is clear against the sky'; 'a more evocative or romantic site will not be found in the midlands' (p. 607). More surprisingly, we learn that the best introduction to the great Palladian Castletown House in Kildare is 'from the top of the 67 bus from Dublin to Celbridge' (p. 215), its principal façade set amidst eighteenth-century parkland and the meandering River Liffey. The volume includes a comprehensive account of the monastic site at Clonmacnoise as well as settlements with much later ecclesiastical connections such as Maynooth, with its grand neo-Gothic St Patrick's College quadrangle by Pugin and chapel by J. J. McCarthy. Nineteenth-century enthusiasts can also delve into the detailed accounts of the great romantic Gothic houses of Birr Castle and Charleville Forest (both in Offaly), the more classical Emo Court and Ballyfin (both Laois), the many 'picturesque' railway stations by Sancton Wood, and the peculiar, severe neo-Gothic churches of John Semple. Similarly, the coeval revival of the Catholic Church and its big-farmer donors (another subject on which the author is particularly knowledgeable) is richly catalogued in the array of convents, schools, chapels and mid-size country houses; we learn that one architect-priest in Durrow, Co. Laois, was remembered by local devotees as no less than a 'man of genius, taste and learning, painter, sculptor, designer, [who] devoted rare talents to the building . . . of the house of God' (p. 318).

The author's command of more recent architecture and art is no less informed or discerning. The many postwar Catholic churches are treated sympathetically throughout (and well featured in the illustrative plates); Tierney highlights the 'structural drama' of the Gothic interior of an otherwise greatly derided 1960s church in Portlaoise (p. 52). Furthermore, this is perhaps the first Irish Pevsner that offers a critical perspective on the fruits of the red-hot years of the 'Celtic Tiger'. Alongside deserving criticisms of its most destructive and vandalistic impulses we learn of major civil buildings that capture the 'optimism and ambition' (p. 54) of these years and hidden gems by local firms such as *Architecture53seven*, including the 'unexpected delight' (p. 552) of an elegant juice bar and nightclub in Portlaoise, finished around 2007. All in all, *Central Leinster* is one of the most important new publications in Irish architectural studies for many years and a major reference work for counties whose heritage is sometimes overlooked by locals and tourists alike.