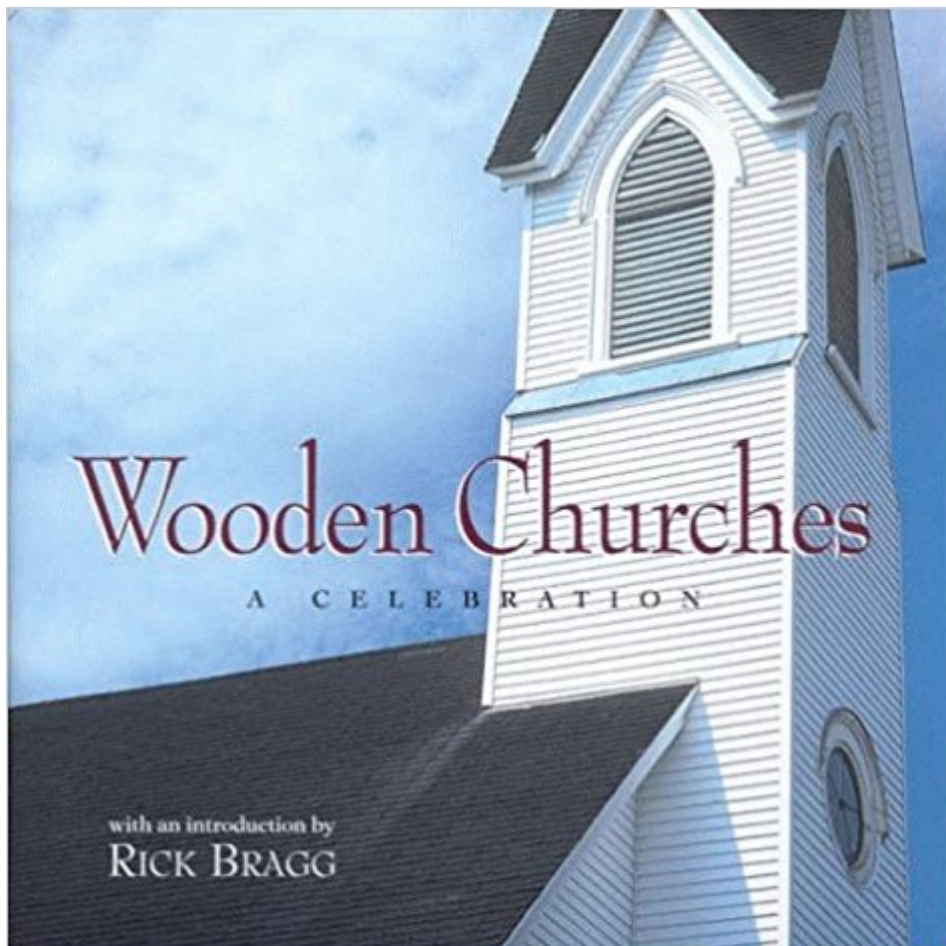




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Wooden Churches: A Celebration



Synopsis

Though usually plain, sometimes humble, wooden churches are something special. With no fancy accoutrements - the flying buttresses, the mountains of organ pipe, the marble floors, the windows of stained glass - wooden churches distinguish themselves through the people who built them, the people who preach in them, and the place they assume in the civic, moral, and spiritual life of the community. There is something about wooden church that moves artists and writers to very personal acts of creation. Perhaps it's the grain of the wood or the flaking paint. Maybe it's the strict angles of the eaves and the way footsteps echo across the floor. *Wooden Churches* glows with the work of such famed photographers as Walker Evans, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, Gordon Parks, William Christenberry, and Tom Rankin and sings in the words of Eudora Welty, Raymond Carver, James Baldwin, Reynolds Price, Mark Twain, Carson McCullers, Lee Smith, Anne Tyler, John Irving, and Thomas Jefferson, among many others. The images and words follow shared lives from birth to death as they unfold between the hallowed walls of wooden churches large and small: the marriages, the picnics, the baptisms, the political meetings, the funerals, the hoedowns, and even the military strategy sessions of General U.S. Grant. In the tradition of Algonquin's bestselling *Out on the Porch*, *Wooden Churches* takes the reader up the steps, through the doorway, and down the aisle of hundreds of American wooden churches, old and new, fancy and plain, rich and poor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Intended for mass consumption, this disappointing collection of 152 duotones of simple rural

churches is being baldly marketed as the spiritual and commercial successor to the publisher's best-selling *Out on the Porch: An Evocation in Words and Pictures* (1992). The present formulaic work opens with a feel-good, get-right-with-God childhood reminiscence by journalist Bragg. Predictably, photos by Walker Evans, Gordon Parks, Russell Lee, and others (identified and dated only in the credits at the end) are unnaturally yoked to passages of mostly Southern fiction, with scant sensitivity to context, content, or artistic and authorial intention. While both the photos and the excerpts are evocative on their own, these lightweight, even interchangeable pairings fail to convey the complexities of rural religious expression and architecture. Of limited library appeal beyond compulsory regional interest and small libraries that may lack adequate representation of primary texts and photos.

Russell T. Clement, Univ. of Tennessee Lib., Knoxville Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Evocative." -- *Style Weekly*"The delicately designed book supplies mean moments of humor, reflection and artistic enjoyment." -- *Foreword Magazine*In his introduction to this slender volume from Algonquin Press, Rick Bragg says you don't have to believe to appreciate wooden churches: "If you grow up in the country, in small towns or big ones, they stand on almost every corner, one every tenth-mile of pine barrens and pastureland, to remind you that there are people who do believe. When you get right down to it, there is just something good about wooden churches." And there is plenty good about this new book, filled with stunning black and white photographs of West Virginia churches, Georgia churches, Ohio churches, Nebraska churches, photographs by anonymous cameramen culled from state historical archives, and photographs from the fingers of famous artists: Tom Rankin, whose shots of the Mississippi Delta demonstrate that at least some pictures are worth a thousand words, as well as Walker Evans and other chroniclers of the Depression. But words sometimes help too: alongside these photographs are passages from Baldwin and Whitman, Lee Smith and Sinclair Lewis, Nathaniel Hawthorne's musings on a minister maybe gone mad, and Clyde Edgerton on what to do with chewing gum during church. Sit with *Wooden Churches* a while, and be stirred. -- From *Beliefnet*

The combination of stunning photography and memorable prose in this book makes it an excellent choice for anyone interested in churches, history, simple architecture, or words. It is a joy both to look at and to read.

This is a good coffee-table book of photographs of American wooden churches. With a topic so vast

I wondered at how Mr. Bragg could manage to represent the denominational and architectural forms in a reasonable and understandable manner. The answer is that he did not even attempt to do so, but has given his personal photographs of churches he has visited across the country. Mind you, he is well-traveled, but has hardly seen all of the states, much less their wooden churches. As a result, one can easily be disappointed that many otherwise significant wooden church buildings have been left out. However, there are many secondary and tertiary buildings that are included, which serves to round out the information from other books on this interesting topic.

Seldom do I go back to Georgia and not visit the little wooden church of my youth. If only those walls could talk. The country folks gathered at revival time. "Dinner on the ground in July. The invigorating sermons. Memories like that are stimulated by Bragg's wooden churches. A treasure.
Grace Luneau

I enjoyed the book very much. Rick Bragg's introduction was as good as Bragg always is. The photos selected and the literary quotes were excellent. I have had an affinity for wooden churches for many years. The book was perfect for me.

Sweet pictures and stories. This book makes a wonderful gift, too.

everything written by Rick Bragg is well worth reading. I only wish he would write more. I have all his books and have read them all a couple times over.

I say "coffee table type" although this book is on the small side, both in terms of thickness and height/width. The foreword by Rick Bragg was his usual excellence and I enjoyed the photos of the old churches and assorted quotes from noted authors.

It was a gift for my husband. He really likes the book. There was actually a church from the city we lived in which was a surprise & made the gift even better! Thank you!

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