

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

Spring 1982

## Review of *Oklahoma Homes: Past and Present* By Charles R. Goins and John W. Morris

H. Keith Sawyers

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Sawyers, H. Keith, "Review of *Oklahoma Homes: Past and Present* By Charles R. Goins and John W. Morris" (1982). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1650.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1650>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*Oklahoma Homes: Past and Present.* By Charles R. Goins and John W. Morris. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. Illustrations and index. ix + 269 pp. \$25.00.

In recent years rather dramatic changes have occurred in architectural historians' perspectives of the built environment in western and especially American culture. Their traditional scope of study, which heretofore focused on major historical eras and architectural monuments of national and international significance, has expanded to include a much more comprehensive range of periods, types, and values such as Victorian and vernacular architecture, regionalism, and ethnicity. As a result, long overdue recognition is being given to work that is significant at the regional, state, and local levels. *Oklahoma Homes: Past and Present* is a product of this phenomenon.

This large-format book is primarily a pictorial record and therein lie both its strengths and limitations. More than four hundred photographs are included, of which twenty-four are in color. A wide range of domestic architecture is illustrated, including dwellings of native Americans; houses constructed of sod, adobe, timber, and stone; vernacular and high-style houses; and contemporary residential architecture. Intended for the general reader, this extensive collection of historical and contemporary images provides tantalizing glimpses of the

domestic architecture in the state.

Unfortunately, the quality of the illustrations is uneven, thereby modestly comprising the ability of the authors to convey their message, which in this instance relies much more heavily upon a striking visual image than the printed word. The use of old photographs of historical views, many of which are included in this work, accentuates the challenge of maintaining uniform quality in value contrast and detail.

The introduction of the book is devoted to a brief review of Oklahoma's early history and its geographical context. It serves as a background for the first section, which illustrates the early homes of the state's native population, and the next three sections, which are organized with regard to construction materials. The remainder of the book, comprising approximately four-fifths of the whole, lacks an organizational framework that either readily facilitates comparative analysis or encourages meaningful interpretation. Furthermore, readers with only modest critical judgment will notice considerable variation in the quality of the architecture presented. These concerns appear to reflect the heterogeneous nature of the selection criteria—architectural merit, historical significance, and well-known occupants of these houses. Applied simultaneously, these criteria present an obstacle that thwarts a rigorous, systematic, and coherent approach to the subject. Furthermore, there is virtually no consistent development of important themes such as ethnic influences in the houses of the early white settlers, the impact and local interpretation of major stylistic movements, and the relationship of contemporary residential design in Oklahoma to its broader national context. The authors barely make an attempt to analyze and interpret the architecture that they illustrate; yet the book does have a value, if not for the scholar, at least for the inquisitive neophyte.

H. KEITH SAWYERS  
College of Architecture  
University of Nebraska—Lincoln