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Review of *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the  
Emerging West, 1843-1923* by Francine Haber,  
Kenneth R. Fuller and David N. Wetzel

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**Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West, 1843-1923.** Francine Haber, Kenneth R. Fuller and David N. Wetzel. Salt Lake City, Utah: Publishers Press. 1988. viii + 168 pp. Preface, photographs, drawings, notes, and index. \$29.95.

Prospective readers of this book would be wrong to assume from the title that they will be exposed to a contemporary version of late nineteenth-century hometown boosterism. The high degree of parochialism commonly encountered in studies focusing upon regional architects and their work is refreshingly subdued in this well written and handsomely illustrated book. The preface provides a revealing summary of the nearly twenty-year history of the endeavor and identifies the sources of substantial scholarly input from an unusually well-qualified cadre of contributors. One of these, Kenneth Fuller, architect and son of Robert Roeschlaub's successor, Robert Fuller, was the original author of the manuscript. It was he who initially recognized the significance of the wealth of primary resource material on the life and work of Roeschlaub which he had inherited from the firm. The current book is the collaboration of Fuller, David Wetzel, research historian with the Colorado Historical Society, and Francine Haber, architectural historian. The book consists of two substantial essays. The first, written by David Wetzel, is a biography of Robert Roeschlaub. This thoroughly documented account of Roeschlaub's background and professional life in Denver is noteworthy for its objectivity and breadth of scope. Wetzel examines the evolution of Roeschlaub's design philosophy and work in convincing detail. He is particularly adept at balancing his observations and interpretations of Roeschlaub's career within both local and national contexts. Not only does the reader gain valuable knowledge and appreciation of Roeschlaub's relationship to Denver's changing "architectural climate" from 1873 to the eve of World War I but also a good sense of how Roeschlaub's professional contributions fit into the broader history of architecture in the United States.

The second essay is written by Francine Haber and focuses upon Roeschlaub's buildings. Haber's knowledge of the subject and analytical skills are formidable, indeed. She subdivides this section by building type examining Roeschlaub's churches, schools, commercial buildings, public buildings, and residences in that order. It is here that the quantity and quality of the firm's surviving design drawings, renderings, working drawings, photographs, and other documents provide the raw material to elevate this accomplished study above the ordinary. Haber's theses that Roeschlaub's

“school designs were his most significant contribution to the development of an architectural building type,” that he “effected a regional architecture from the eclecticism of the 1870s and early 1880s” and that “his architectural hallmark was the integration of heating, ventilation and lighting systems into the aesthetics of his buildings” are supported by a substantial body of evidence. She reinforces her arguments with a truly exceptional number of high-quality photographs, renderings, plans, and detail drawings. These are examined from a point of view attesting to the author’s extensive knowledge of Roeschlaub’s work and her keen powers of perception and interpretation.

In addition to providing many outstanding black and white illustrations, the authors have included a section of color plates. Many of these are photographs of original Roeschlaub renderings and drawings. These exquisite drawings of building elevations, wall sections, and construction details originally executed in ink and colored wash reflect a level of skilled draftsmanship which has virtually become a lost art in today’s world of computer-generated graphics.

This book is well written, visually attractive, informative, and insightful. Through an examination of the career and work of one talented and very professionally competent architect, the authors have made a significant contribution to the growing body of studies acknowledging the contributions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architects working at the local and regional level. **H. Keith Sawyers**, *Department of Architecture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.