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**Review of *Homes in Alberta: Building, Trends, and Design
1870-1967* by Donald G. Wetherell and Irene Kmet**

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Homes in Alberta: Building, Trends, and Design 1870-1967. Donald G. Wetherell and Irene Kmet. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, Alberta Municipal Affairs, 1991. x + 363 pp. Photos, drawings and references. \$32.50 cloth.

I must admit right off that I was preparing for reviewing a dry piece of work. I believe that most readers including myself will be pleasantly surprised if not more accurately impressed with the obvious mountain of research and effort that was needed to compile this publication. The presentation of the information is very well done indeed. It is entertaining in the early chapters on Settlement and the Modern House, and continues to be so throughout. The consistent use of quotes from architects, newspapers, builders, and planners from the eras being discussed definitely give a great deal of insight into the social and political and economic climate in Alberta. The boom and bust economy of Alberta has been a reality throughout its existence as is the slow change from a agricultural based economy to development of natural resources. The influence to building trends in Alberta due to large numbers of families moving in and out of the province as well as migrating to the large centers for employment reasons during different periods of time is well illustrated. The general lack of planning in most centers in their early years is almost unbelievable. As the province

matured, the public and public officials demanded changes in building techniques and town planning for reasons including individual and public health, as well as creating some description of order to the development in small and large centers in the province. The presentation of the development of the Modern House is very concise. Home ownership has always been associated with individual success and is no different in Alberta. The right to ownership was encouraged with the creation of Federal and Provincial agencies that assisted in the financing. As well, governments became involved in establishing building codes to ensure minimal standards in construction. The evolution of building materials, from primitive shelters to homes built with standardized materials including plywood and studs is another area well researched and presented. As a resident of Alberta for the past fourteen years I am always surprised at what initially seemed to be a lack of history in this part of the country. The reality is that history certainly exists in abundance, and in most cases has been compressed into only the past 100 years. The resulting whirlwind of activity and development is truly amazing.

As I travel around the province in my work I now see more and understand more clearly homes, towns, and cities from a social, health, economic, and political perspective. I look for homes that represent social, economic times and the introduction of new materials and construction techniques. Overall I very much enjoyed reading *Homes in Alberta* and would recommend it to anyone with any interest in building. **Peter Caron**, *The Housewright, Edmonton, Alberta*.