

The American College Town. Blake Gumprecht. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008. xx and 438 pp., maps, figures, notes, index. \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 978-1-55849-671-2).

Reviewed by Wilbur Zelinsky, Department of Geography, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

At last! With this literally unprecedented volume, Blake Gumprecht has filled what might have been the most grievous of gaps in the literature on our American settlement landscape. Moreover, he has done so in magisterial fashion by telling us in wonderfully readable prose virtually everything one might wish to know about those many scores of special places that help set the American scene far apart from the rest of the world. Except for a few brief items on particular neighborhoods, none of the multitude of scholars working or living in college towns have ever trained their sights on their immediate surroundings. Just why remains a tantalizing mystery.

This master observer of landscape and people has fashioned a notable career by exploring the unjustly unexplored. However, it is obvious that no other phenomenon has so deeply and lengthily engaged Gumprecht as has those cherished college towns. Nor has any other project of his involved more mileage, photographs, interviews, general anguish, and ferreting out so many obscure publications. As an example of this obsession, he visited forty-five of the sixty places deemed worthy of close attention, some of them repeatedly, and more than 105 college towns in all.

After a largely autobiographical preface, the first of ten chapters confronts the challenge of defining the college town and does so to my complete satisfaction. In brief, he includes "all places [with more than a certain unspecified population] that meet the 20 percent [four-year college] enrollment-to-population threshold, but also had had an urbanized area population in 2000 of less than 350,000 (a college town can't be too large), were nucleated urban areas that were physically separated from any larger city (to exclude suburbs and cities that are part of bigger urban agglomerations), possess a distinct identity apart from other places, and are perceived as college towns." As of 2000, there were 305 places fulfilling these requirements, with at least one representative in every state except Hawaii and Nevada. Narrowing his focus somewhat, Gumprecht singled out some sixty places for closer scrutiny and special mention in the text. Then, finally, as we

shall see, each of a set of eight towns is featured in a particular subsequent chapter.

Although the two sets of towns, the 305 and 60, are nicely mapped in two figures, nothing further about them is specified in chapter 1, and herein lies the only serious flaw I can complain about in this publication. It would have been so helpful and relatively easy to provide a table or two listing population, college type, enrollment, date of founding, and other key attributes for each place. Perhaps this will be added in a later edition.

Although Gumprecht does not highlight the fact, college towns are just one particular species within the much broader genus of company towns, places that owe their special character to a single dominating enterprise, whether manufacturing, mining, military, government, education, or a cathedral. The college town stands apart from all other agglomerated settlements, however, as our author explains in some detail, by virtue of the makeup of a population that is, on average, more youthful, transient, highly educated, and likely to be employed in white-collar or professional jobs and, more often than not, leaning leftward in political sentiment. Then, even though some other places might rival it in terms of a high quality of life, cost of living, and cosmopolitan character, the college town has few counterparts in terms of unconventionality. Their comparative rarity in other countries—even in Canada and Australia, America's closest sociocultural siblings—is a striking fact and one offering ammunition for champions of American exceptionalism. Gumprecht does allude to this remarkable international disparity in numbers but only in passing. A thorough investigation would have taken him too far afield. However, what chapter 1 does accomplish in exemplary fashion is the provision of a concise, but admirable, general history of the American college town.

The bulk of this volume, its eight central chapters, consists of a series of case studies in each of which a specific school and its ancillary town exemplify a particular aspect of college-townness. Gumprecht has chosen well as he proceeds to present richly detailed historical and

geographical analyses of the various localities. All these chapters are adorned with crisply rendered maps and delicious photographs. In every instance but one, the narrative is enriched with vignettes of local characters, usually business entrepreneurs, musicians, artists, writers, or just picturesque hangers-on.

We begin with Norman and the University of Oklahoma, whose deeply cherished ensemble of structures and landscaping has served wonderfully well as a public space for the city population in general as well as for the school community and out-of-town visitors. Then, as a prime exhibit of the ensemble of fraternity row, student ghetto, and faculty enclave, we are treated to a survey of Ithaca and Cornell so detailed as to verge on the definitive. The next stop is Manhattan and Kansas State's Aggieville as a classic example of the college-oriented business district.

Serving as a prime example of progressive political correctness in all its vicissitudes, we have Davis and its (somewhat Berkeleyish) University of California community. Then, what better exhibit for an aptly titled "Paradise for Misfits" than present-day Athens, Georgia (and an unbelievably far cry from the town I first encountered in 1948), with all those alumni and other free souls who cannot bear to live elsewhere? It would also have been difficult to find a more extreme expression of "Stadium Culture" than what we see in Auburn, Alabama. Gumprecht's account of its football weekend frenzy merits anthologizing by virtue of its sheer narrative sizzle. An obligatory chapter on university-related research parks finds us in Ann Arbor and its purples. The concluding case study covers Newark and the University of Delaware and the vexed coexistence of town and gown.

With the single exception of Ann Arbor, each of these essays is suffused with warmth, sympathy, and intellectual delight. It was only with the darkest of misgivings, however, that Gumprecht came to realize that his opus would be incomplete were he to omit some treatment of research parks and their relationships to the university and larger community. "Researching and writing this chapter has been a struggle. A summer spent reading and thinking about high-tech has demoralized me." That demoralization shows in the product. The dutiful chapter in question lacks even a single *personal* vignette (to complement some bloodless accounts of a few leading makers and shakers) or any hint of emotional commitment. The reader can almost hear the sound of gritting teeth. Perversely enough, however, and in spite of himself, our author has managed to make a significant theoretical contribution to urban economics when he

arrives at an answer to the question of why, when the leading high-tech centers in the United States are all home to major research universities, none are college towns. If curiosity gets the better of you, turn to pages 287–91.

Welcome though all eight case studies might be, as a loyal card-carrying resident and voter in Centre County, Pennsylvania, I confess to being mildly incensed that Gumprecht did not make a special fuss about Penn State and my beloved State College, thereby saving himself a great deal of shoe leather and a heap of dollars. I live in *the* quintessential college town. Unless I am woefully mistaken, Penn State is the solitary example among the sixty study towns in question where the college *preceded* any sort of noncollege settlement, founded as it was in 1855 smack in the middle of a cornfield four miles from the nearest village of any consequence and preceding by three decades the incorporation of the borough that eventually crystallized around it. Moreover, State College offers ample raw material for seven of the phenomena featured in this volume, the one exception being the political. Even in that case, the community, despite its heavy agricultural, mining, and engineering legacy, is edging, ever so hesitantly, in a leftward direction.

It only remains to note a judicious, carefully reasoned final chapter in which the author ruminates about the future of the American college town. I cannot argue with the statement that "the college town . . . has settled into a period of relative equilibrium. . . . College towns will continue to change incrementally, but the characteristics that make them unusual and compelling are likely to persist."

Is there any way this marvelous contribution could have been made any richer? Possibly. Although Gumprecht does note the topic in passing, an entire chapter devoted to the college town as a haven for the retired would have been welcome and rewarding. (Here, again, State College is doing itself proud.) Then there are the rich potentialities of examining college towns here and abroad within the world of fiction. Even though our author does casually allude to two or three novels, permit me to fantasize about another chapter—or an entire volume—that would consider how our more gifted and perceptive writers have dealt with life in the college community and its surroundings. Among many other items, it would necessarily deal with Jane Smiley's classic *Moo* and the works of such authors as Mary McCarthy, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, David Lodge, and my personal favorite in the genre, Virgil Scott's *The Hickory Stick*.

In any event, we have here a remarkable achievement in this flirtation with perfection by Blake Gumprecht. I have read it with unalloyed pleasure and hope that a vast number of readers will share my joy—

even if it happens to be assigned reading, as it should be.

Key Words: college towns, research parks.

Fatal Misconceptions: The Struggle to Control World Population. Matthew Connelly. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. 544 pp. \$19.95 paper (ISBN 978-0-6740-3460-0).

Reviewed by Seamus Grimes, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland.

Matthew Connelly has written a remarkable history of the population control movement based on an exhaustive examination of the archives of key organizations and actors involved in it. Others before him, including leading demographers such as Demeny (2003) and Greenhalgh (1996), both of whom were Population Council insiders, have exposed many uncomfortable aspects of this movement and particularly the intellectual history behind it, but Connelly's exposure is the most comprehensive to date. Although Connelly himself is an obvious critic of the extensive abuse of human rights that accompanied the imposition of population control ideology on millions of people in poor countries, he makes it clear that his own personal position favors unrestricted freedom in relation to reproduction. This is unlikely to prevent him from being subject to harsh criticism from many whose interpretation of population control is one of extending philanthropic assistance to those wishing to control their fertility. The vast array of information on this movement that Connelly provides will allow students in the coming years to approach the history of this period with a much more nuanced understanding of a movement that has in more recent years completely lost its credibility.

The major strength of this book is that the author, for the most part, allows the key actors to speak for themselves and present their own case for population control. Its major weakness, perhaps, is where he himself seeks to impose his own explanatory framework on the movement's evolution and on what he regards as its eventual dissolution. Although arguing that the movement has finally run out of political capital, he suggests some ideological continuity in the more recent debate surrounding bioethics.

Rather than presenting a philosophical deconstruction of the thinking underlying the ideology of population control, Connelly's approach is to provide considerable archival background from the key actors involved. This is a story about a relatively small network of individuals, who developed a common response

to the rapid growth in population, particularly in poor countries during the past century, associated with rising life expectancy. This response was predominantly negative and pessimistic and in most cases was strongly influenced by eugenicist thinking, seeing the lives of some members of humanity as having less value than others and presenting a threat to the general welfare of society and to the environment. In many ways the history of the population control movement, which was centered in the United States but also had many supporters in other parts of the world, including political and other leaders in the poor countries themselves, is a fascinating account of the emergence of an unelected network that gained huge influence and indeed control over the lives of poor and powerless people.

This network, composed of a wide range of leaders in many sectors of society, including government, business, and academia, evolved into what Connelly refers to as the "population establishment," which had as its main preoccupation controlling the fertility of impoverished people. This establishment gained enormous influence and credibility through a wide range of organizations, including most of the agencies of the United Nations, the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and a plethora of nongovernmental organizations such as International Planned Parenthood. All of these organizations worked hand in glove to reduce population growth in poor countries and received huge funding from exceptionally wealthy philanthropists such as John D. Rockefeller, who in turn established the Population Council, which played a key role in the movement. This became an interlocking network of exceptionally influential people who gained enormous political support and much of its funding from the U.S. government but also from other countries over time.

Although Connelly's book is only beginning to open up many topics that will require more extensive research in the future, one in particular that deserves comment is the implication of demography itself and