

Books Received

by M.A.D. Staff



A Space for Faith: The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England by Paul Wainwright (Jetty House, 2009, 128 pp., hardbound, \$35 plus S/H from the author, [www.aspaceforfaith.com], or from Enfield Publishing and Distribution, [www.enfelddistribution.net] or [603] 632-7377).

Thirty of New England's surviving Colonial meetinghouses are presented here in black-and-white images that were captured using only natural light. Architectural photographs, writes Paul Wainwright, "are usually seen as illustrations of what a structure looks like," but showing structure is not Wainwright's primary intent. "Rather, I see beauty and mystery in these meetinghouses. I love the textures of the wood. I am impressed with their regularity and symmetry—they are beautiful in their austerity and simplicity." The photographs include exterior views and interior details.

Most of these meetinghouses date from what is called the second period, 1715-1800, when "many of the earlier 'Puritan' liturgical practices...were being replaced by quieter, more inclusive, more formal 'Congregationalist' ones, and town houses and large public halls were gradually replacing meetinghouses as the sites of town meetings that handled municipal business."

An essay by Peter Benes offers insights into architectural origins, denominational differences, meetinghouses as centers of town life, and the demise of the parish system. Sadly, only around 180 of the approximately 1000 New England second-period meetinghouses still stand. This book is a fine tribute to some of those survivors.

In December 2010 *A Space for Faith* was awarded the New England Book Festival Award for best photography/art book of the year. Bruce Haring, director of the New England Book Festival, commented, "*A Space for Faith* shows a true artist's eye for detail and serves as a wonderful guide to a part of the region that deserves more attention."