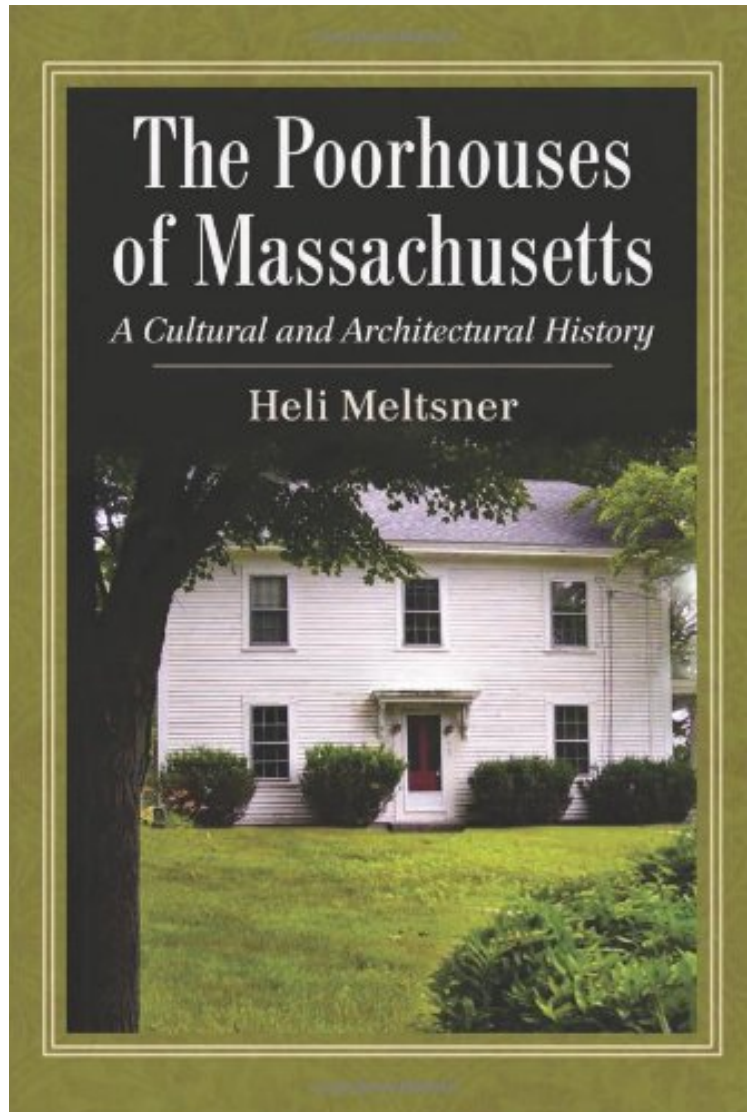


(Read now) The Poorhouses of Massachusetts: A Cultural and Architectural History

The Poorhouses of Massachusetts: A Cultural and Architectural History

Heli Meltsner

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research and good pictures. Wish there had been more background on the decisions to build the various poorhouses; the particular needs they were to satisfy in each case.

Ever since the English settled in America, extreme poverty and the inability of individuals to support themselves and their families have been persistent problems. In the early nineteenth century, many communities established almshouses, or "poorhouses," in a valiant but ultimately failed attempt to assist the destitute, including the sick, elderly, unemployed, mentally ill and orphaned, as well as unwed mothers, petty criminals and alcoholics. This work details the rise and decline of poorhouses in Massachusetts, painting a portrait of life inside these institutions and revealing a history of constant political and social turmoil over issues that dominate the conversation about welfare recipients even today. The first study to address the role of architecture in shaping as well as reflecting the treatment of paupers, it also provides photographs and histories of dozens of former poorhouses across the state, many of which still stand.

"This interesting volume on architectural history examines the building of poorhouses in the state of Massachusetts throughout American history"--Reference Research Book News. About the Author Heli Meltsner, the curator of the Cambridge Historical Society, has been a town planner and a preservation consultant, undertaking numerous nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and historic resource inventories for municipalities and state agencies. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.