

End Papers

GREAT AMERICAN MANSIONS. By Merrill Folsom. 310 pages. Hastings House. \$10.

A man's home is his castle, and sometimes it was a castle. Mr. Folsom traces what might be called the American Castle Complex from its elegant Georgian beginnings (ostentatious in their own day, but tasteful now, so do relative values change) to baroque Victorian excesses and 20th-century esthetic megalomania.

Prepared with fine journalistic objectivity, this book is a relentless record of what egotism, vulgarity and cultural naiveté, plus an awful lot of money, can produce in snuggeries and status symbols for the rich.

Owners like Mellon, Rockefeller, Frick, Huntington, Ringling and Flagler were determined to live like kings, and they did. It was probably an excellent thing that the American neo-noblemen were around to catch the falling Italian palazzo ceilings and the tottering Louis XVI boiserie which they incorporated in their New World palaces. It is a preservation of a sort.

Many of the mansions are national or state properties open to the public. Mr. Folsom gives direction, admission charges and pertinent visiting data. The book is almost as good as the trip.

—ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE.