

## Pre-1850 Western Reserve Greek Revival Churches

David R. Anderson

From the graceful elegance of Lemuel Porter's church on the Tallmadge green to the stolid Roman temple of the Congregational Church on the green in aptly named Freedom, pre-1850 churches on the Western Reserve are primarily inspired by classical precedent. The predominance of the Greek Revival building type reflects the general desire of Americans in the Old Northwest to emulate the national identification with Greek design as most consistent with the young nation's democratic aspirations. There exists, nevertheless, a surprisingly wide range for the expression of Greekness in the frame churches of the Reserve. Equally as interesting—but occurring far less frequently—are the occasional mavericks (usually Episcopalian) which eschew the Greek for the more liturgical (and western European) Gothic.

The choice of Greek, classical style for Christian houses of worship is a complex one. Commentators are sometimes driven to logical convolution in order to reconcile pagan temple with Christian ideals; the Greek revival is not simply a reflection of New England transplanted to Ohio, but a conscious and complicated reflection of the strains found in the fabric of antebellum American life. Asher Benjamin, in guides such as his 1833 *Practice of Architecture*, discusses at length the nuances of the different Greek orders as they appear in American ecclesiastical and secular architecture.