



*Robert Twente*

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Reproduced from John T. Windle and Robert M. Taylor, Jr.,  
*The Early Architecture of Madison, Indiana* (Madison and  
Indianapolis, 1986).

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## Book Reviews

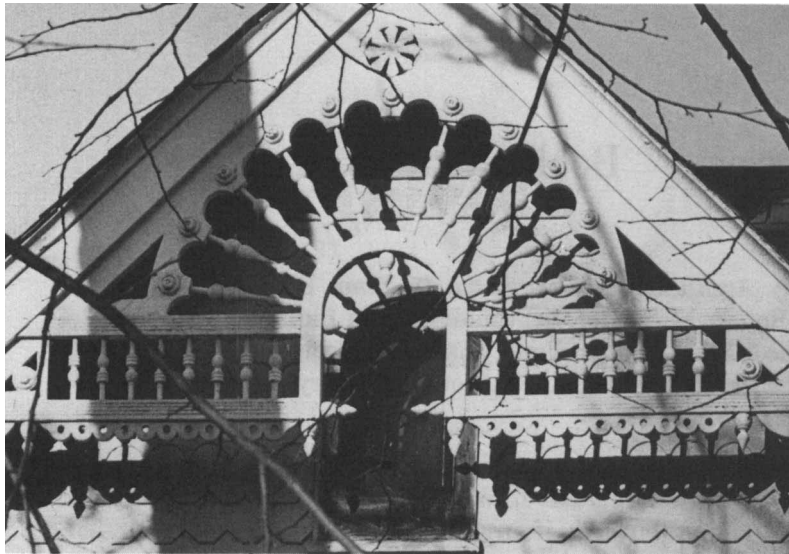
*The Early Architecture of Madison, Indiana.* By John T. Windle and Robert M. Taylor, Jr. (Madison and Indianapolis: Historic Madison, Inc., and Indiana Historical Society, 1986. Pp. xvi, 230. End map, illustrations, notes, glossary, bibliography, indexes. \$29.95.)

There have been surveys of historic architecture in Indiana cities and towns before John T. Windle's *The Early Architecture of Madison, Indiana*, but few, if any, surpass this new work on one of the nation's loveliest and best-preserved places. Since 1948, when he retired from the Newberry Library, Windle has devoted himself to the protection and enhancement of his adopted hometown. In 1960 he founded Historic Madison, Inc. (HMI), as one of the premier local historic preservation organizations in the United States. HMI and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have made Madison a model of small town revitalization.

*The Early Architecture of Madison* is a tribute to Windle and those who have worked so hard with him. The book was begun almost twenty years ago under the guidance of the late Wilbur Peat, who was well-known for his pioneering work on the architecture of the Old Northwest.

The book begins with an excellent historical overview of the town by historian Robert M. Taylor, Jr. Taylor shows an ability sadly lacking in most architectural historians—he clearly understands the significance of economic, cultural, and geographic dynamics for the built environment. Using his keen quantitative abilities, Taylor combines statistical data with first-hand newspaper accounts and other primary materials to bring the genesis and development of Madison alive.

Windle's approach, however, is more conventional. After the overview section, Windle presents 168 buildings, most arranged according to roughly sequential architectural "styles." A brief definition of each style begins each chapter. Individual buildings are photographed and outlined with salient dates, uses, owners, events and with a description. The order of appearance is a mystery, although it seems that Windle begins each section with the grandest examples and moves to the marginal. This is a hackneyed paradigm more convenient to authors than helpful to students. Windle thinly disclaims the notion that the "styles" he uses (Federal, Classic Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, French Second Empire,



*Frank S. Baker*

SCROLL-SAWED AND TURNED PEAK DECORATION, 606 WEST THIRD STREET



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IRON BALUSTRADE, 512 EAST MAIN STREET

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Queen Anne Revival-Eastlake, Mixed Styles—Mixed Styles?—and so on) are neat pigeon holes.

This approach works best for Madison's high-style domestic architecture. But a substantial portion of what Windle describes and analyzes defies categories. Architectural history will foster a far greater understanding of the past when early *ordinary* architecture is treated in the same terms afforded other cultural artifacts.

The lack of maps or other aids is a serious weakness for this survey as well as others in the genre. Taylor's splendid overview needs graphics and better illustrations to back up his narrative. The book could have easily done with less space devoted to pictures of cornices, windows, brackets, bargeboards or other architectural curiosities.

There is, however, a good deal to admire. Windle draws on a wealth of primary materials (most, unfortunately, unfootnoted) and the collective wisdom of friends and colleagues going back almost forty years. Windle also gives a few industrial and vernacular structures their due. The city's fabled Main Street is thoroughly treated, though divided up according to "style" instead of with any kind of spatial or environmental perspective. What good does it do anyone to know that at 317-19 West Main "the lower edge of the cornice above the windows is also curved to follow the curves of the windows" (p. 165).

These criticisms naturally raise questions about the purpose of such surveys. Are they meant to praise the old line with loads of genealogical material? Are they intended to reward those who do a good job of maintaining or restoring their historic properties? Are they meant to reinforce the good deeds of the publisher?

Windle and Taylor have done this and, thankfully, more. Students of Indiana history should welcome this work and hope for more in the future.

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*Indiana Artists George Jo and Evelynne Bernloehr Mess: A Story of Devotion.* By June DuBois; with "A History of Printmaking in Indiana" by Martin F. Krause. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1985. Pp. [x], 130. Illustrations, notes, catalog of artists' works, index. Paperbound, \$13.95.)

It is refreshing to find a book about artists that so thoroughly accomplishes exactly what it set out to do: to tell a story of devotion. As one reads the six chapters, which chronologically outline the lives of two successful Indianapolis printmakers, one discovers