

and other Porter songs. The most unfortunate omission was forced on the producers: they could not obtain permission to include any of Frank Sinatra's absolutely essential interpretations of Porter lyrics.

Still, this is an absolutely first-rate production. The music has been well transferred to compact disc; much of the work was apparently done by John R.T. Davies, the unsurpassed master of transfers from 78 rpm records. The accompanying booklet is handsome, with plenty of illustrations and an intelligent, informative essay by Porter expert, Robert Kimball. Whatever Cole Porter's roots in Indiana, this collection is a splendid chance to sample the genius of a great American songwriter.

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*The Main Stem: The History & Architecture of North Meridian Street.* By David J. Bodenhamer, Lamont Hulse, and Elizabeth B. Monroe. (Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1992. Pp. [ix], 149. Illustrations, catalog of buildings, index. \$37.95.)

David J. Bodenhamer, Lamont Hulse, and Elizabeth B. Monroe have chronicled the development of Indianapolis's most his-



MERIDIAN STREET IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Courtesy Bass Photo Company Collection;  
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toric and prestigious residential street. *The Main Stem* includes three chapters entitled "The Street and the City," "The Street and its Residents," and "The Street and the Houses," as well as a section devoted to handsome photographs taken in recent years by Marsh Davis, and finally a catalog of the major North Meridian Street houses, providing the address, the architect's name (if known) and the owners over the years. The catalog is the direct result of researchers' work in preparation for listing the North Meridian Street Historic District with the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

The authors provide a concise social mapping of this period of Indianapolis history. They demonstrate that the changes on the domestic front resulting from World War I, the Depression, and World War II are reflected in the planning of houses and in the stylistic aspirations of house owners. For example, the early houses include servants' quarters and delineate the formal and informal rooms of the house, while the later homes have more open plans and reflect the efficiency popularized by the time-motion studies of the period.

*The Main Stem* is a good case study of an early twentieth-century American residential district built by developers. North Meridian Street was neither planned as tract housing, nor were the houses designed for specific owners. Rather, planning was the result of developers' speculation. The houses were built in response to what was considered acceptable or "collective" taste in an upper-middle-class housing market. In the houses along North Meridian Street, as the authors point out, "Developers rarely embrace eccentric designs." The developers "marketed" the houses and their images to a narrow buyer group that had a "collective" taste.

The development of North Meridian Street provides the subject for an essay in upper-middle-class American culture during the first half of this century. Along North Meridian Street one can see fine examples of the "modern" styles at the turn of the century: the American Foursquare and Prairie houses; the Revivalist styles of the 1920s and 1930s, specifically the Tudor Revival, the French Farmhouse and Chateau, and the Renaissance Revival; and, finally, during the post-World War II period a return to the modern style once again, this time as the informal ranch style. One style, the authors point out, the Colonial Revival, constantly held its ground throughout the development of North Meridian Street.

It is in the Revivalist styles that one sees nostalgia, rather than a quest for innovation or experimentation, guiding the pre- and post-Depression eras. This is partially because of the group of buyers who typically came from an established professional background and for whom the more traditional styles were more appealing. It is also attributable to the popularity of Revivalist



ENTRANCE HALL TO THE BAKER RESIDENCE BUILT IN  
1924

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styles among such princes of capital as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and others whose homes set the standard for such styles. The authors point out that the Revivalist styles were touted as most appropriate by such trend-setting publications as *Country Life*, *House and Garden*, and *House Beautiful*.

Booth Tarkington, himself a resident of North Meridian Street, observed that "there was much artifice to the new houses." The styles varied from house to house with an eclectic exuberance, while the floor plans remained almost identical in their adherence to a central hall plan with a living room and sun porch to the south and dining room and kitchen to the north.

*The Main Stem* provides readers with a concise overview of the North Meridian historic district. Photographs abundantly fill its pages, though there could be better coordination at times between the photographs and the text. Nonetheless, *The Main Stem* is a substantial contribution to both Indiana history and American architectural history.

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