

abruptly, shy of the last decades of the century. It addresses neither the immense impact of the Civil War nor the profound economic and social changes of rapid postwar industrialization and immigration. Still, Gjerde broadens our understanding of the dialogue between two worldviews that continued to shape American society into the twentieth century.

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Museums, Monuments, and National Parks Toward a New Genealogy of Public History

By Denise D. Meringolo

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012. Pp. vii, 207. Illustrations, notes, index. Paperbound, \$26.95.)

Today, the federal government's role as a keeper of the nation's heritage is well established in the United States. Of the four hundred or so units of the National Park Service (NPS), fully two-thirds exist primarily to protect and interpret cultural treasures. The work of managing these historic sites falls into the larger professional category of "public history," a field dedicated to making the past meaningful and relevant to the wider public. In her recent book, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*, Denise D. Meringolo takes readers back to a time before governmental protection of historic sites and argues that the evolving federal role in preserving natural and cultural resources set the stage for the modern public history profession.

The commonly told story about the development of public history

as a field begins in the 1970s. During that decade, the production of graduate-trained historians in the United States far exceeded the supply of academic jobs in the field. In the face of an ever-growing imbalance between job-seekers and available jobs, a few graduate programs began offering a different kind of historical training, one that prepared historians to work outside of the academy and bring the skills of scholarly history to bear in the service of the public. Thus, the story goes, the new field of public history was born.

Meringolo offers a different story of public history's genesis, one that begins before the Civil War and focuses on the role of the federal government in developing our current understanding of cultural heritage. Her book begins in the 1830s and traces numerous intersecting paths

over the next century, as the government begins studying its vast natural resources; the Smithsonian Institution begins collecting specimens from throughout the continent; Congress begins designating certain landscapes as national parks; the War Department begins memorializing Civil War battlefields; and federal laws declare certain archaeological sites under federal protection.

The creation of the National Park Service in 1916 further institutionalized the role of the federal government in protecting resources. Over the next twenty-five years, historic sites and artifacts came increasingly under the NPS's protective mandate, while at the same time, the agency's mission expanded to include not only preservation of resources but also education of the public. The heart of Meringolo's story lies in the Park Service of the 1930s, when New Deal programs and a growing awareness of dying regional traditions greatly expanded the government's efforts in preserving historic sites. And here lies the crux of Meringolo's argument: from this messy stew of natural resource exploitation, landscape protec-

tion, a cultural chauvinism that saw Native American resources as more "natural" than "historic," turf wars between the Smithsonian and the NPS, and Depression-era expansion of federal jobs developed the foundation of our approach to managing historic resources in the twenty-first century. And our standard genesis story, beginning in the 1970s and focused solely on academia, ignores it all.

Meringolo makes a solid case for re-envisioning the profession's roots. Public historians in Indiana and beyond will gain a new perspective from reading her book. However, the story is a specific one and necessarily, at times, becomes bogged down in bureaucratic intricacies. As such, it will probably prove of limited interest to the casual reader. Nevertheless, for those who work to preserve and present historic resources to a wide audience, the book is well worth reading, as it provides a far richer understanding of our professional heritage than has previously been available.

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