

REVIEWS

Historic Preservation in Indiana: Essays from the Field

Edited by Nancy R. Hiller

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Historic preservation is a movement that is concerned with conserving places with meaning from the past, but all too often does not look back at its own past. This book, edited by Bloomington cabinetmaker and preservationist Nancy Hiller, seeks to fill a void in the history of preservation in Indiana by drawing together the recollections and reflections of preservationists, primarily in the Bloomington area.

For the story of preservation in Bloomington, Hiller has chosen a mix of academics, professional preservationists, and hands-on preservers to bring out differing perspectives on the nature and value of preservation. Duncan Campbell, a long-time Bloomington preservation consultant, ties the goals and challenges of the conservation movement launched by John Muir to those faced by preservationists. Noted Indiana Univer-

sity folklore professor Henry Glassie paints a richly textured picture of the preservation impulse, ranging from the adaptive uses of Imperial Roman temples as Christian churches to the repurposing of humble urban houses in Bloomington as affordable housing. Bill Sturbaum and Teresa Miller recall their own histories as pioneers in rehabilitating and revitalizing Bloomington's Prospect Hill neighborhood. Both recount experiences that reflect the history of the modern American preservation movement, a large segment of which consists of people who have invested money and sweat equity in old houses and neighborhoods.

Elizabeth Schlemmer and Scott Russell Sanders tell of the battles to save two important Bloomington landmarks: the local Carnegie Library and the Monroe City Courthouse. Schlemmer recounts how a handful of preservation advocates in the 1970s

successfully challenged the prevailing notion that old buildings like the library had finite lives and had to be demolished. Sanders describes how the courthouse became an integral part of the city's identity. When officials proposed razing the courthouse, preservation organizations changed public opinion to favor retaining the domed "palace of justice."

Gayle Cook, co-founder of Bloomington-based Cook Group and a well-known preservation benefactor, explains how she and her late husband Bill took on preservation projects as part of their business expansions. They eventually gave new life and relevance to sixty historic buildings in Indiana and Illinois; in most cases, the finished structures generated income. Donald Granbois and Steve Wyatt illustrate the work of Bloomington Restorations, Inc., one of the state's most successful local preservation organizations, and illustrate how it has saved and rehabilitated over seventy-five historic structures.

Five essays deal with preservation topics outside the Bloomington area. Edith Sarra discusses efforts to identify and preserve vestiges of the Wabash and Erie Canal and adjacent historic features in the Patoka Bottoms area, and Cynthia Brubaker urges adaptive uses for historic industrial structures in Muncie. Vicki Basman and Benjamin Clark review

the importance of historic properties within the state park system since the days of founder Richard Lieber. Cheryl Munson provides a rare explanation of the role of archaeology in historic preservation and suggests how each field can enhance the goals of the other. Finally, David Brent Johnson describes how historic neighborhoods in Indianapolis have added materially to the quality and meaning of existence for residents there.

One hopes that Hiller or others will follow this much needed and insightful book with another volume that portrays historic preservation experiences in other parts of Indiana. Such a book could also indicate in more detail how grassroots preservationists have used governmental historic preservation programs to support their efforts.

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