their stifling conformity, and more seriously, for their exclusion of racial minorities. Buggeln acknowledges the validity of these criticisms. But at the same time, her study recaptures the excitement and dedication these churches’ builders brought to the task of designing the new postwar world, and calls us to reconsider their legacy—not simply drive by.

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doi: 10.2979/indimagahist.114.1.11

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**Curating America: Journeys through Storyscapes of the American Past**
By Richard Rabinowitz

Richard Rabinowitz loves museums. “I am still amazed at the magic of the museum moment at its best,” he writes, “when it crystallizes the immediacy of the theater, the meticulous scholarship of the library, the open-ended adventure of the laboratory, and the conviviality of the family table” (p. 59). Those of us who also love museums owe a great debt to Rabinowitz. As co-founder of the consulting firm American History Workshop, he has contributed to the development of some of the most impressive museums and exhibits of the last half-century, including the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and the New York Historical Society’s 2005 exhibit *Slavery in New York.*

In *Curating America,* Rabinowitz reflects on a fifty-year career spent at the intersection of historical scholarship and the museum world. Through a series of personal anecdotes and behind-the-scenes descriptions of myriad projects he has worked on, Rabinowitz considers the ways our telling of the American past has evolved since the 1960s. The result is an entertaining, if sometimes overly ponderous, “cultural history in the form of a professional memoir” (p. 12).

Rabinowitz is a good storyteller, as anyone in his trade must be, and he begins the book with a “road-to-Damascus” tale of one Sunday in 1967 when, on a visit to Old Sturbridge Village (a living-history museum in central Massachusetts), he suddenly realized the power of
museums to bring the past alive to a contemporary audience (p. 1). Within a week, our author had taken a leave from his graduate program in history and secured a job at the very historic site where he had had his revelation. A public historian was born. And though he did eventually finish his PhD in history from Harvard University, he seems never to have lost his passion for sharing the past with a wide public.

Much has changed in the museum world since 1967. Back then, museums spoke as voices of authority, conveying a singular version of the American past through text-based exhibit panels and artifacts perched behind glass. Today, museums are far more likely to be multimedia experiences, describing multiple voices and perspectives as they invite visitors to engage actively with the past on their own terms. Rabinowitz has had a front-row seat for this evolution—indeed, he has played a significant part in the transformation. His memoir provides an opportunity for him to reflect on these changes, generally praising the path museum practice has taken, but also raising a few concerns and calls for redirection.

The author’s use of his own experiences provides specific examples of larger trends, and his skill at balancing these two lenses, makes Curating America an informative and engaging read. Public historians will enjoy his stories about their evolving craft, while academic historians will enjoy seeing the ways that their scholarship informs the creation of historic sites, museums, and exhibits.

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