

Public History: An Introduction, edited by Barbara J. Howe and Emory L. Kemp. Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1986. vii, 508 pp. Notes, illustrations, appendixes, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$27.50 paper.

Public History is a collection of essays which comes closer than anything that currently exists to being an introductory textbook on the practice of public history. Its thirty-two selections explore in great detail the methods employed by the thousands of historians who work in settings other than the academic. It is thus not surprising that the book is receiving much commendation, including an award from the editors' home institution, West Virginia University.

Both Barbara J. Howe and Emory L. Kemp are extremely well-qualified editors of, and contributors to, this volume. Howe, who has a Ph.D. in history from Temple University, has designed an M.A. public history program at West Virginia University. She has also been very active in the National Council on Public History and is current chair of this national organization. Kemp has a Ph.D. in mechanics from the University of Illinois and has long experience in the preservation of historic industrial sites. At West Virginia University he founded the Program in the History of Science and Technology and teaches courses on historic preservation and the history of technology. The two editors supply effective introductory materials as well as useful essays concerning historic preservation and industrial archeology.

The offerings of the many contributors are divided into three sections. In the first of these, an introductory overview of public history, Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., defines public history as "a loose confederation of content areas and occupational interests," an undertaking that is "alive, well, and growing" (11). The section is completed by an entertaining and effective exploration of the "perils" of public history by Gerald George, former director of the American Association for State and Local History.

The numerous essays in section two range over the many and wide varieties of public history, an enlightening discussion for those who would like to know what the term public history "really means," or for the instructor intent on exposing students to the considerable dimensions of public history. Archive management, oral history, editing public records, historic preservation, natural resources management, and interpretive media are among the topics considered.

Part three, also extensive in scope, examines the practice of public history in museums, history organizations, public projects, government and public works, the national park service, public policy, and business. Methods and technique come under close scrutiny by such experienced public historians as Larry E. Tise, formerly head of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and now director

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of the Association for State and Local History, and Heather Huyck and Dwight Pitchaithley of the National Park Service.

In the conclusion the editors aptly point out that public history "is everywhere." They note that in these essays one finds "public historians in unexpected places, bringing a sense of history to an amazing spectrum of people and institutions." They hasten to add that not all public history positions are represented in the book, nor can they predict future developments (455).

Howe and Kemp hope that this volume will serve as a textbook for courses in public history as well as a reference for more specialized courses. That hope seems reasonable given the wealth of information and guidelines they have brought together. The potential usefulness of the volume is further enhanced by two appendixes, the first a bibliographic essay regarding the use of library resources and the second a directory of public history resources and organizations.

There is no doubt that this rather large book works. It is comprehensive, informative, insightful, and well indexed. The editors and contributors have done teaching historians a great favor in making it available for classroom use. To date, instructors in introductory public history courses have had to rely on museum manuals, technical bulletins, scholarly articles, and whatever other bits of information they could piece together for their students. Now, extensive information is captured in a single, albeit rather expensive, volume.

Users may take issue with other potentially problematic features of the book. The detail is almost overwhelming, the contributors and perspectives so numerous as to induce confusion, if not sleepiness, and the types of public history touched upon almost mind-boggling. Still, those with a more positive approach to the volume will see these very features as pluses rather than minuses.

Whatever their perspective, no reader will be able to deny *Public History's* representation of the great vitality that characterizes the field and the enthusiasm of practitioners concerning their craft. Perhaps their enthusiasm stems in part from the fact that, although public historians have long existed, they now enjoy an enhanced status as the result of the public history "movement" of approximately the last decade. This book, along with the National Council on Public History and its journal, *The Public Historian*, are manifestations of a new "respectability" and recognition accruing to a type of historian who has long brought an appreciation of the past to anyone interested in learning about the history of this country, its states, regions, and locales.

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