

*Buying Time for Heritage: How to Save an Endangered Historic Property*, by J. Myrick Howard. Raleigh: Preservation North Carolina; distributed by University of North Carolina Press, 2007. viii, 187 pp. 64 color and 35 black-and-white illustrations, notes, appendixes, index. \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Paula A. Mohr is an architectural historian and Certified Local Government coordinator at the State Historical Society of Iowa. Her research interests include nineteenth-century public architecture and sacred spaces.

As the title of this book suggests, sometimes historic preservation is not about actual rehabilitation but rather involves working to ensure that a threatened building lives to see another day. J. Myrick Howard, a veteran preservationist with more than 30 years experience, believes that using the real estate market is one of the more effective tools preservationists have at their disposal. By acquiring control of a property through temporary ownership, an option to buy, donation, or an easement, the fate of a property can be shifted from inevitable loss to a new lease on life. This highly readable "how-to" book is based largely on Howard's experience as executive director of Preservation North Carolina, which has acquired and sold more than 600 historic properties since 1977. Included in this book are model purchase contracts, covenants, rehabilitation agreements, and case studies. Along the way, Howard recounts numerous success stories (illustrated with compelling "before" and "after" photographs) as well a discussion of the lessons learned from projects that did not come to fruition.

One of the first misconceptions Howard addresses is about the financial capital required to participate in the real estate market. Perhaps the most important message of this book is that he is describing a preservation program, not a bank account, and his examples bear this out. Chapter five is subtitled "Using Others' Money and Time to Do Your Work"; there he details the options available short of outright purchase. What is required instead of money is knowledge of real estate and financing, determination, and creative partnerships. A key aspect, Howard notes, is "keeping your eye on the preservation goal and not being diverted by personality and personal differences" (100). Yet he acknowledges that these projects often carry risk and are not for the faint of heart. Having a committed board is critical to taking decisive action quickly to save a property from ruin or demolition.

This book also tackles a number of hot topics in preservation today, including the museum question. When is it appropriate to convert a historic property into a museum? Howard takes the position many pragmatic preservationists have adopted: museum use is sometimes valid for exceptional properties, but private ownership and

adaptive use can be more effective in broadening preservation's base of support. Howard also devotes a chapter to the increasing popularity of moving historic buildings; the chapter includes a straightforward explanation of the issues, advantages, and disadvantages of relocating a historic property.

This book invites the question: Could a similar acquisition fund help Iowa preserve its historic properties? Iowa shares in common with North Carolina a rural base, comparable median income, a similar historic building stock, and a state historic tax credit program that can go a long way toward facilitating rehabilitation of endangered properties. As elsewhere in the nation, there is a great need to find new stewards for old buildings as public institutions, manufacturing facilities, and private property owners rethink priorities or downsize their physical operations. As Howard puts it, many of these historic properties are like the dogs at an animal shelter. They are worthy adoptees in search of a caring owner.