

America's Main Street Hotels: Transiency and Community in the Early Auto Age, by John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009. xiii, 217 pp. Illustrations, figures, tables, notes, index. \$29.95 paper.

Reviewer Patricia Mooney-Melvin is associate professor of history at Loyola University Chicago. Her teaching, research, and writing have focused on urban and public history, historic preservation, and tourism.

Small-town hotels represented anchors of small to mid-size communities from the late 1890s through the 1950s. Centrally located downtown, these institutions showcased community progress and provided tangible and intangible benefits for community members and the traveling public. As they entered the second half of the twentieth century, these hotels faced innumerable challenges that have placed their very existence in question. John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle explore their history and role in countless communities across the United States. In so doing, they deepen our knowledge of both an institution of American life and the communities in which these hotels operated.

Their suggestive study focuses on six elements of the hotel experience. First, they concentrate on these institutions' physical transition from railroad hotels to those that increasingly acknowledged the advent of the automobile. Second, they examine the business aspects of the hotel enterprise. Hotel management is the focus of the third part of their study. In the fourth component, Jakle and Sculle explore the dynamics of hotel life. In the fifth section, they discuss the role of food and drink in hotel operation. Finally, the authors analyze the challenges inherent in changing times. They conclude with an exploration of the ways specific hotels have undergone a process of re-envisioning as they face a very different economic, travel, and community landscape from the era in which they grew and blossomed and served as economic engines and community centers.

By concentrating on smaller hotels rather than resort hotels or the fashionable hotels of large cities, Jakle and Sculle provide a window into the ordinary — the places where more of the people on the go were likely to stay. They detail the inner workings of the hotel as well as how its managers learned to accommodate a new type of traveler, the motorist. Hotels built before 1910 owed their existence to the railroad era. Although amenities existed in railroad hotels, the advent of automobile travel encouraged a reinvention of the downtown hotel.

Reinvention included a wide range of activities in addition to a different customer base. Taller, more distinctive buildings, inviting public areas, enhanced amenities and staffing, and the addition of automobile-friendly features characterized the hotels built especially

after World War I. During the 1950s, however, the expansion of roads to accommodate defense needs, housing opportunities, and increased pleasure travel rearranged the transportation geography in a way that increasingly limited the use of downtown hotels for motor travel by the 1960s. New motels joined other commercial ventures and new housing developments on the urban periphery, and the travel dynamic shifted away from the central city.

As community-based institutions, downtown hotels provided a range of services, from hosting service clubs and offering fine dining to providing rooms for local residents to mark special occasions. Hotels provided arenas for social interaction and local identification. By providing services and venues for activities, these hotels helped define what it was to be modern as well as to belong in small-town America.

Jakle and Sculle explore all parts of the United States, but the midwestern section of the nation figures prominently in their analysis. From Sinclair Lewis's fictional town of Gopher Prairie in *Main Street* to the Iowa hotels in Marshalltown, Rock Rapids, and Fort Madison to the hotels located in small towns along U.S. 40 and the Lincoln Highway, the midwestern world of traveling gets significant coverage.

Regardless of their location, small-town hotels faced seemingly insurmountable challenges as the nation's automobile landscape shifted the economic locus of most small towns to the fringes of the community. Downtown districts languished, and the bustling hotels that helped define these communities fell on hard times. Reinvention, however, can occur at any time. Jakle and Sculle end their study with a look at the ways some of these institutions have adapted to changing conditions.

Rather than offering an exhaustive study, Jakle and Sculle have sketched the outlines of an unfinished story and have whetted the imagination. Anyone interested in his or her community will find similarities and differences in the fate of their own hotels. New research will flesh out this story and deepen our knowledge of life in our communities.

Communities of Frank Lloyd Wright: Taliesin and Beyond, by Myron A. Marty. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009. x, 306 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Rob Sovinski is professor and chair of the landscape architecture program at Purdue University. He is the author of *Brick in the Landscape: A Practical Guide to Specification and Design Materials and Their Applications in Landscape Design* (1999).

Myron Marty's book on Frank Lloyd Wright manages to occupy a unique niche among the considerable library of books that deal with