

*This American House: Frank Lloyd Wright's Meier House and the American System-Built Homes*, by Jason Loper and Michael Schreiber. Portland, OR: Pomegranate, 2021. 128 pp. Images, notes. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Laura Sadowsky is the State Historian with the Historic Preservation Office at the State Historical Society of Iowa. She oversees the National Register of Historic Places program in Iowa. An experienced architectural historian, she is also a Ph.D. student in history at Iowa State University.

Living in an old house is like stepping into the timeline of history itself. The pace of life slows, surrounding us with the imprints of those who came before even as we rearrange and alter spaces to suit our own lives. *This American House: Frank Lloyd Wright's Meier House and the American System-Built Homes*, by Jason Loper and Michael Schreiber explores this concept of historical continuity through the story of one small-town house with unexpected connections to the infamous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The Meier House, named for the couple who originally had it built in the northeastern Iowa town of Monona, is one of a dozen of Wright's ill-fated American System-Built line of houses that survives today and the only one in Iowa.

After a brief overview of Wright's architectural vision for the perfect American style house and an introduction to the chain of families who lived, loved, and cared for the Meier House for over a century, the first chapter focuses on Wright's career and personal life along with those who worked and partnered with him in launching the American System-Built line. Tapping into the exploding mail order house market of the time, Wright developed several models that could be combined in a number of ways to provide comfortable, well-designed homes at an affordable price for the average, middle-class family. Subsequent chapters explore the genealogy and lives of the original owners, their experiences during the house's construction, and the lives of subsequent residents, all of whom lovingly left their own marks on the house. As though taking the reader on a personal tour, the authors interweave a flowing, room-by-room description with the memories of former owners and their descendants to paint a picture of how each family furnished, altered, and created memories within the house. The narrative draws to a close with the authors' own story of falling in love with this hidden gem so far away from where they had originally envisioned their lives unfolding and their hopes for the future of the house.

Although Frank Lloyd Wright looms large in myriad books and articles that others have written about him, in *This American House* he recedes into the background, allowing the house's own story to rise above that of its famous architect. The authors' extensive research into the

house's history is obvious through the countless interviews they conducted and their efforts to include historical details that situate the house and its occupants within a broader Iowa story. Because memories involve stringing together brief snippets of lives and conversations with people no longer living, some of the narrative does stray into supposition where no facts provide concrete answers and there were a few missteps in critically evaluating a small number of historical sources and details. Overall, however, it is a well-written, inviting narrative with lovely, informative images. Though centering on the story of one house, at its heart, this book is about families, the memories we attach to places, and finding where we belong.

*Booth Girls: Pregnancy, Adoption, & the Secrets We Kept*, by Kim Heikkila. Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2021. 256 pp. 21 black and white photos, notes, index, bibliography. \$18.95 paperback.

Reviewer Renée Ann Cramer is Deputy Provost and Professor of Law, Politics and Society at Drake University. She is the author of *Birthing a Movement: Midwives, Law, and the Politics of Reproductive Care* (2021) and *Pregnant with the Stars: Watching and Wanting the Celebrity Baby Bump* (2015).

What was it like to be an unmarried pregnant woman in the Midwest in the 1950s and 60s?

Kim Heikkila's book, *Booth Girls: Pregnancy, Adoption, and the Secrets We Kept*, offers us a social and oral history of a particular institution (the Booth Hospital in Minneapolis-St. Paul) and the women it served, embedded within a complex set of memoir narratives that intertwine Heikkila's mother's experience of mothering (through relinquishment, and through parenting) with Heikkila's narrative (through pregnancy loss and adoption). These narrative threads—of her mom, of herself, and of the women at Booth in the 1960s—offer a meaningful view of unmarried pregnancy at the time.

As I read *Booth Girls*, the word that kept coming to mind to describe the experience was "stuck." Heikkila's mom (Sharon) and the other young women at Booth were quite simply—and quite intractably—stuck. For a time, Sharon was stranded at home—sent to live in the upstairs room where no one could see her and proof of her pregnancy. Of this time, Heikkila writes, "she was hidden in plain sight, when shame and uncertainty and anger and boredom collided in a modest house on Tyler Street" (64). Then, she was stuck at Booth until she labored and delivered. Next, as we learn from the later passages in *Booth Girls*, Sharon was stuck living a particular version of femininity—as a lively coed