

describes the racism and even vigilantism in the community while criticizing some of the black power leadership.

Monhollon's research is thorough, but it is puzzling that he did not collect some oral history. It would only enrich his story to share some of the memories and voices of people on different sides of the issues in the community. Even so, we learn much about how the events and issues of the 1960s played out in this one midwestern town, and we gain important insights into some of the emotional responses to those events and issues. If people personalized the issues then, it helps explain why the polarization continues to run so deeply. More studies of the 1960s are likely to follow Monhollon's example.

Interpreting Historic House Museums, edited by Jessica Foy Donnelly. AASLH Book Series. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002. viii, 326 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 paper.

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Historic house museums are found in cities and towns of all sizes. Most often, they are the former residences of local or national elites or the work of well-known architects. In her introduction to *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, editor Jessica Foy Donnelly points out the rich educational potential of such sites. "A residence is a universally understood place. Every visitor starts with the benefit of understanding this fundamental relationship" (3). Despite their great potential, house museums often have difficulties taking full advantage of their assets. Although visitors today are far more likely to hear about domestic servants, slaves, and the women of the house than they were twenty years ago, some house tours continue to focus narrowly on the male owner of the house and the objects he collected.

During the past twenty years, museum professionals have experimented with new interpretive techniques and stories told from multiple perspectives, but until now there were few published resources to consult for fresh approaches to interpretation. The contributors to *Interpreting Historic House Museums* fill this gap by providing tools and techniques applicable to sites of all sizes. The 14 essays, written by a diverse collection of museum professionals and scholars, suggest a broad range of approaches historic house museums can use to breathe life into their research, tours, and educational programs.

Donnelly identifies balance as the key to enhancing interpretation, and the individual essays illustrate how this concept is negotiated

within historic house museums. The preservation of historic places has benefited from what Patrick H. Butler III describes as a redefinition of what is "historic" to create a wider variety of sites and stories. This movement toward "Interpreting the Whole House," discussed in Rex M. Ellis's essay, has encouraged long-established house museums to integrate stories from diverse perspectives with those of the wealthy owner families. Other authors discuss interpretive planning, tour techniques, and educational programs that support more inclusive approaches. For example, "moment-in-time" installations highlight interiors that reflect specific periods and activities, thus emphasizing the people living and working in the house rather than catalog descriptions of the artifacts. Theme-based tours demonstrate the holistic interpretation of people and objects as well as the place of the site in its larger historical context. The liberal use of case studies throughout the book provides clear examples of how interpretive theories can be applied in the "real world."

Essays concerned with the practical issues house museum staffs face every day complement the overarching theme of balanced interpretation. Negotiating historic preservation and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act is addressed as an important part of making interpretation accessible to all visitors. Recommendations included in this collection for creating interpretive plans, producing historic furnishing plans, and recruiting, hiring, and training interpreters will be extremely useful to house museums of all sizes and types. The result is a collection of essays that achieves a balance between theories and their practical applications.

Interpreting Historic House Museums covers a lot of territory and brings the profession up to speed on recent interpretive innovations. Perhaps the only thing lacking in this impressive collection is a focused discussion of the interpretive challenges of the future. The questions of how to include controversial or taboo topics and how to make the stories of the past relevant to contemporary issues present their own challenges, which some historic houses have started to address. Despite this oversight, the essays are thought-provoking and vivid illustrations of a variety of tours and educational programs. *Interpreting Historic House Museums* demonstrates just how diverse and exciting the stories of historic house museums can be.

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