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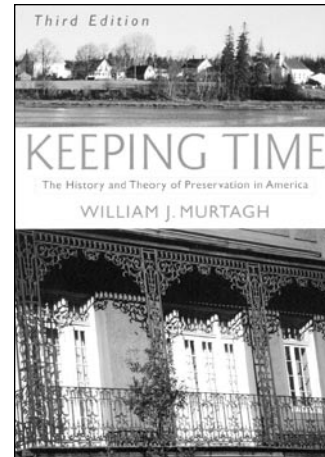
# **Preservation Education & Research**

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William J. Murtagh. *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. 3rd Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2006, 183 pp., black-and-white photographs, drawings, charts, paper, \$55.00, ISBN: 0-4714-7377-4.

Is it possible for one author to summarize the background, development, scope, and philosophy behind America's preservation movement in language both intelligent and accessible in fewer than two hundred pages? It certainly is. William Murtagh's third edition of *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* continues to prove that preservationists can speak plainly to the average American in effective but concise terms.

Prior to the original publication of *Keeping Time* in 1997, the preservation community had few options for a general volume on the subject. Preservation texts often had to be supplemented by other readings in order to give students a complete picture, and most of these volumes were far too esoteric for the average reader. *Keeping Time's* publication paved the way for other authors, who have since presented different solutions to the need for a comprehensive text on the American preservation movement. Despite this, *Keeping Time* remains a classic, thanks largely to Murtagh's easy-to-follow prose and strong organization.

Few people are as qualified as Mr. Murtagh to pull together the various points of view that make up modern historic preservation. After Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966,

Murtagh served as the first Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. In this role, he helped shape a cornerstone preservation program. Murtagh has since held positions with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and has served in academia with distinction. With such a background, Murtagh is able to offer insights from many angles.

*Keeping Time* is broken into fifteen chapters. The preface from the previous edition has been “preserved”; it is reprinted in the third edition along with a new preface. Non-preservationists might chuckle at this, but this approach lets one gauge the changing winds in the preservation movement. Murtagh reserves chapter one for terminology, again, adding to the readability of the book. The other chapters are topic-specific: “The Preservation Movement and the Private Citizen Before World War II,” “The National Trust,” “Government and Preservation,” “House Museums,” “Historic Districts,” “Rehabilitation and Adaptive Use,” “Preservation in Practice,” and more.

Rather than attempting to organize the entire U.S. preservation movement in chronological order, Murtagh divides subjects into units that allow for a more complete understanding of particular issues. This approach is very useful for the novice. One of the most important features of *Keeping Time* is that it provides “one stop shopping” for readers. Appendixes provide key documents, such as legislation and rehabilitation standards, as well as a glossary and full bibliography. In short, there is no need to turn to another source.

Those familiar with *Keeping Time* may wonder if a third edition is worth a refresher read or adoption in the classroom in place of the older edition. The content is nearly the same as the 1997 first edition; however, Murtagh adds a preface, a new chapter titled “Preservation Values in Oral-based Cultures,” and a completely rewritten final chapter, “And What of the Future?” The changes are welcome and refresh the publication. The new chapter introduces readers to the challenging world of traditional cultural places, or, as Murtagh defines it, sites invested with significance by virtue of oral-based religious beliefs or cultural activity. The rewritten final chapter offers insight into newer preservation concepts that focus on the significance of

“place,” such as National Heritage Areas and cultural tourism. Murtagh concludes that these strategies are transforming preservation into a broader, more locally based movement.

*Keeping Time* makes an excellent foundation text for an introductory, graduate-level, preservation course. Perhaps more significantly, it also provides an easy bridge to the preservation movement for interested citizens. Practicing preservationists may find that *Keeping Time* is too cursory for their needs. Its value for the professional is as a ready reference to general concepts and key legislation. But, a full decade after its first edition, *Keeping Time* remains highly informative, readable, and relevant.

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