

Tyler the Planner and King the Anthropologist: Varying Views on Historic Preservation

Urban planner Norman Tyler, along with Ted J. Ligibel and Ilene R. Tyler, authored *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*. Tyler received his first Ph.D. in Architecture from the University of Michigan in 1987, where he taught a preservation studio course in the Taubman School of Architecture and Urban Planning. He followed with a second doctoral degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University. In the interim period between his two doctorates, Tyler ran his own planning consulting firm in which he focused on planning, architecture, and historic surveys. Both of his dissertations have looked specifically at the use of downtown revitalization in community planning projects. He now serves as a professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan University, where he both taught in the Urban and Regional Planning department and served as director for almost ten years. For the second edition of Tyler's book, Ted J. Ligibel and Ilene R. Tyler also contributed. Ligibel received his Ph.D. in American Cultures Studies from Bowling Green State University in 1995. Prior to receiving his Ph.D., he worked professionally as a preservationist. In 1976 he became the Regional Preservation Officer for Northwest Ohio Historic Preservation. By 1985 he worked with in academia as a Research Associate for the University of Toledo's Urban Affairs Center. He now serves as director of Eastern Michigan University's Historic Preservation program housed within the Geography and Geology Department. Ilene R. Tyler received her Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Michigan in 1970. Tyler owns her own historic preservation consulting firm, Ilene R. Tyler LLC. Before starting her own firm, she worked for twenty eight years at Quinn Evans Architects, which focuses on community revitalization through historic preservation practices. Together, the three scholars come to preservation with urban planning backgrounds.

Thomas F. King, author of *Cultural Resource Laws and Practices*, received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California Riverside in 1976. King is best known for his involvement in the drafting of the language and process for Section 106 review under the National Historic Preservation Act. He has put this regulation to use through his work with American Indians and other minority communities. He worked in the federal government for both the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Parks Service. In these positions he oversaw and reviewed Section 106 projects. King currently runs his own consulting firm, TFKing PhD LLC and continues to work with the federal government, American Indian tribes, and the International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery as their volunteer senior archaeologist. King comes to historic preservation from an anthropological and archaeological background, which is reflected in his emphasis on cultural resource management and the protection of traditional cultural properties.

Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler's *Historic Preservation* reads as an introductory guide to the field of preservation. The chapters are broken down by topic and include several illustrations, case studies, and photographs. The chapter topics range from architectural styles and design to the legal basis of historic preservation to heritage tourism and economics. One thing that several chapters have in common is that they all relate back to preservation planning. Design guidelines, designation of historic districts, and the combination of preservation economics and planning are all rooted in community and urban planning. Because the three authors have experience in urban planning and downtown revitalization, their book places a greater emphasis on this aspect of historic preservation than others. The end of the book also includes a further reading list, preservation resources and their websites, a list of degree programs in historic preservation or other relevant fields, and architectural terms with illustrations.

King's *Cultural Resource Management Laws and Practices* is now in its fourth edition. As he pointed out in the preface to the book, he felt that he hastily updated his third edition to then publish the fourth, but little difference has been made. King is angry about the state of cultural resource management as it stands today and, possibly, rightfully so. With a long career in the field, including continually advocating for the protection of historic resources and traditional cultural resources, he has had a hand in revising guidelines and best practices textbooks. Yet, as he mentions, more laws and regulations have led to greater confusion within cultural resource management agencies. Along with the increase in laws, an increase in oversight has also occurred, which King seems to view as a hindrance. Overall, the book reads as both a guide to understanding the legal history and principles of cultural resource management and King's personal disillusion with what the field he has worked in for so long has become.

One point that Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler seemed to miss relates to how urban revitalization through the use of historic preservation practices can lead to the displacement of people already living in the urban core. In the chapter on historic districts and ordinances, the authors briefly touch on opposition to district designation. They pose four possible reasons for opposition: the loss of power within a particular local governmental agency, the fear of the financial burdens associated with the maintenance of historic districts, an institution such as a university or state-run hospital may not be subject to local ordinances, and individual citizens may worry they will lose their property rights. The fourth reason relates most closely to displacement, but the authors propose this from an elitist standpoint. Their use of the quote "Don't tell me what I can and can't do with my own property!" is used as the cliché for district

opposition.¹ However, this ignores the real risk designation poses for less economically advantaged homeowners and renters. Given the authors' roots in urban planning and community development, it makes sense that they would see district designation as a way to revitalize a community and reinvigorate businesses, leading to more wealth for a city. Nevertheless, this chapter completely ignores the real concerns of people who are pushed out of revitalized cities by higher property taxes and home prices as more wealthy families are drawn to the newly established historic district. Even in 2009 the authors had a plethora of examples to draw upon, such as Seattle, several boroughs in New York City, and Sacramento.

Related to that critique, Tyler Ligibel, and Tyler also seemed to miss the role of community engagement in historic preservation. Again, as urban planners focused on community revitalization, this seems like too important of an aspect of ethical historic preservation practices to miss. They make an attempt to suggest community engagement should be part of the process in Chapter Six, but fall short of using the actual phrase. The authors allotted a single paragraph to community engagement, but only in the context of alleviating any opposition to historic district designation. While true that community engagement is often used for mitigation of opposition and concerns, many historic preservationists and city planners now turn to communities on the onset of any designation, zoning updates, and revitalization planning. Considering that the book is often used as an introductory text book for young preservationists, the authors missed a critical aspect of the designation process that students need to be introduced to early on so that they continue to share authority with those affected by their projects throughout their careers.

¹ Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 179.

While these authors have written on similar topics that encompass historic preservation, architecture, and cultural resource management, their different backgrounds led them to place greater emphasis on different aspects of the fields and produce similar, yet varying works. Preservationists like Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler are quite possibly the reason that King is so angry in the fourth edition of *Cultural Resource Management. Historic Preservation*, at times, carries elitist undertones and makes historic preservation seem exclusionary. They fail to mention the importance of vernacular architecture in the chapter titled “Architectural Styles, Contextualism, and Design Guidelines.” They fail to incorporate community engagement as a vital aspect of preservation planning in their chapter on district designation. Even in the St. Bartholomew’s Church example, often viewed as a success story for historic preservation, the authors frame the dilemma as a win at any costs to the church and invoke legal rights to preservation at the cost of the religious institution. While King’s entire argument is based upon the laws that regulate cultural resource management, and by extension, historic preservation, he does not hold back on his critiques of these laws. He often invokes the idea of community engagement and encourages practicing preservationists to talk to the people that may be impacted by district designation, by site development, or by a National Register nomination. Not only are regulations and laws in place to protect historic resources, but also to protect the people that care about them. Ultimately, if historic preservation is to be utilitarian and provide all people with the chance to engage with historic resources, then practicing preservationists cannot allow the field to return to its elitist roots.

Despite these critiques both Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler and King produced valuable resources for preservationists. *Historic Preservation* holds value as an introductory text book to the field. While not without its faults, the book introduces students to broad topics within the

field, like the professionalization of preservation, architectural styles, the designation process, and broad laws and regulations. The abundance of illustrations help readers to visualize specific buildings or general topics throughout the chapters. Additionally the inclusion of the further reading list, preservation resources, list of historic preservation collegiate programs, and architectural terms, again with illustrations, add to the book's value. Even after introductory preservation courses, practicing preservationists can return to this book when they need a reminder on overarching legislation or guidelines.

King's *Cultural Resource Laws and Practices* reads as a follow up book to Tyler's because he goes more in depth on the topics Tyler introduces. He explores the laws that allow for cultural resource management and the best practices for those working in the field. With his experience in top preservation agencies, King has become disillusioned with a professionalized field that he once helped pioneer. Where Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler introduce students to an overview of historic preservation, King criticizes those same regulations and guiding principles. While King's somewhat dismissive language and crass critiques may put some readers off, his explanations and analyses are valuable to those learning about the field and the issues they may encounter working for the various cultural resource management agencies. However, the book may not be the best text for students without much knowledge of the field. The use of acronyms prove difficult to remember, but the inclusion of an appendix with acronyms and abbreviations provide some relief. His disillusion with the field and where it is going could also potentially turn some students away from historic preservation if they do not have some prior experience or working knowledge of preservation practices. The book should also be used by those already working in the field as a reminder of what each regulation or principle is and how it should be implemented in regards to best practices.

For my own personal research interests, I find King's book more useful. While both present overviews of the field, I found myself more often agreeing with King's critiques. With cuts to humanities funding and an influx of history students pursuing non-traditional history degrees, it is important for students to understand the field that they are entering into, including the problems and potential downfalls. King presents the case that the regulations that were put into place to guide preservationists are becoming outdated. Yet, instead of updating these guidelines, professional preservationists simply add more layers of laws and regulations to them. Furthermore, his critique of the National Register and the criteria a historic building or landscape must meet in order to receive designation align with my own concerns about the elitist and exclusionary nature of historic preservation and the need for cultural historians within the field.

King also highlights the importance of the interdisciplinary nature of cultural resource management. As someone who comes from a history background, but needs to understand architectural styles and construction, environmental impacts, landscape architecture, and many other facets of cultural resource management, I realize that historic preservation courses alone might not encompass all of these. Similarly, I am not an archaeologist nor an environmentalist so I would not understand aspects of the Section 106 process on an archaeological site as a trained historic preservationist. Keeping cultural resource management interdisciplinary, while allowing individuals to specialize in specific aspects of it, will allow for better projects and easier preparation of impact statements or assessments.