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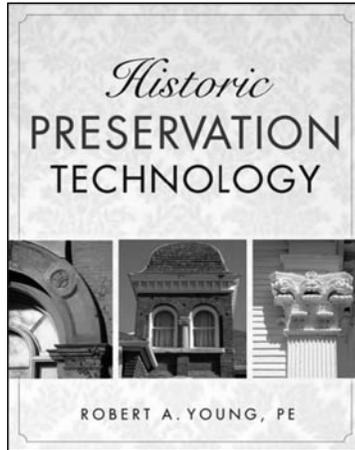
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Robert A. Young. *Historic Preservation Technology: A Primer*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008, 435 pp., black-and-white illustrations, hardcover, \$70.00, ISBN 978-0-471-78836-2.

As I write this review, there are behind me three floor-to-ceiling bookshelves containing my personal library. The collection reflects my career and passion for building history and technical preservation and covers such disparate topics as stained glass, roof trusses, steam-heating systems, decorative plasters, wood pathology, and the development of the curtain wall. What if I could take the information contained here and summarize it in a properly-referenced, 400-page beginner's guide? Robert Young has done precisely that in his book *Historic Preservation Technology*.

Though historic preservation is a well-established discipline, only in the recent past has it been raised to the level of a science. There are now numerous graduate-level programs and professional organizations from which to choose. Preservation projects themselves have grown larger and increasingly complex. In such a burgeoning field, it is difficult to know where to begin your knowledge base. *Historic Preservation Technology* is ideal for the student considering a career in the science of preservation or the educator teaching

the subject. It is also an excellent reference for the preservation advocate or NGO who requires a quick primer in preservation technology.

The book establishes a strong foundation for an American audience. It introduces historic preservation ideology, as well as the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, by incorporating both the art and science, or the *yin and yang*, of the profession. Thus, it necessarily views preservation technology through the filter of sustainability and preservation stewardship, which go hand-in-hand with environmental stewardship.

The book is laid out in five sections—process overview, building materials, building fabric, building ornament and finishes, and special topics—that together reveal a conscious bias towards smaller buildings, such as houses and single commercial properties. The process overview section presents a dissertation on the assessment and selection of remedial approaches to preservation and also discusses the codes and standards that might direct these selections. Because the book is written for the American audience, this section examines at length the interpretation and use of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, which federally funded programs must follow and which is widely ascribed to elsewhere.

The remaining sections explore specific materials involved in historic construction. The building materials section presents the history, development, and pathologies of wood, stone and brick masonry, concrete, and metal in a cleverly simple approach to understanding the main materials that make up the bones of American historic building stock. The section on building fabrics presents those materials that envelop the outside of the building, such as roofing, siding, windows, and doors. The building ornament and finishes section examines interior treatments: ceilings, walls, and floors. Here, the reader is educated on decorative plaster, wallpaper, tile, and parquet floors. Special topics include passive and active climate-control systems, electrical systems, plumbing, and issues of sustainability.

Historic Preservation Technology is recommended for the novice in the field of preservation. It is also a good resource for the educator's classroom use—and no doubt this last is the *raison d'être* of the book. But an experienced practitioner may find the book frustrating, as would the experienced skier confined to the bunny slope. At more than four-hundred pages, it appears the author was torn between depth and length. The materials section, for example, presents the basics of building very well but lacks a definite discussion on building structure. Also, the first section would have benefitted from a consolidated discussion of preservation philosophy rather than philosophical tidbits sprinkled like spice throughout the narrative. But, as an introductory-level text, the appropriate balance was struck. I, personally, look forward to using it in the classroom.

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