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Book Review - Buildings of Savannah

Kristi L. Smith

Armstrong State University, kristi.smith@armstrong.edu

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Off the SHELF

Buildings of Savannah by Robin B. Williams; with David Gobel, Patrick Haughey, Daves Rossell, and Karl Schuler (University of Virginia Press, 2016: ISBN 978-0-8139-3744-1, \$34.95)

Buildings of Savannah leads readers on a self-guided tour of historical buildings, houses, neighborhoods, and military forts in Savannah, Georgia, mostly located in Savannah's Historic District. The book—which is laid out like a tour guide—provides the reader with historical architectural details of the buildings and houses it discusses; it includes black-and-white photographs, maps, and sketches of several of the buildings and geographic areas it covers.

Buildings takes readers on ten downtown tours, which can be traveled on foot, four tours of downtown's surroundings neighborhoods, which should be traveled by car, and six tours outside of the downtown area, which should also be taken by car. It includes a section for the reader explaining how to use the book, as well as an index and bibliography. As readers embark on each tour, they encounter the buildings in the book in the order they encounter them on the street.

The book lists the address of each building, its date of construction, its date of reconstruction or renovation, and, when known, the architectural firm and builder responsible for construction. In addition, it provides an architecturally historic narrative for each

building, pointing out building materials, architecture styles, and origins of the buildings.

The book provides interesting background information about some of the buildings and houses it describes. For example, the former Samuel Pugh Hamilton House (now the Hamilton-Turner Inn) was the first house in Savannah to have electricity. Its owner, Mr.

Hamilton, was a Brush Light Electric founder. When depicting the architectural details of this house, Williams stated, "... this is the city's grandest Second Empire residence, with ornate quoining, window hood molds, lintels, and a crowning mansard roof."

Devoted mainly to buildings and houses in Savannah's downtown area, 175 pages of the book cover this geographic area, while 87 pages cover structures lying outside of downtown. The book could benefit from including photographs of every house and building listed, to lend more visual attraction to the reader. Color photographs would have set off the vibrantly-colored and

ornate structures better (such as the Gingerbread House), and again provide more visual appeal.

The book's five authors are professors in the Architectural History Department of the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), which is located in downtown Savannah. This may account for the book's focus on Savannah's



Historic District, and the prominence of SCAD buildings in the book. Robin B. Williams, *Buildings'* main author, is Chair of SCAD's Architectural History department. Also working within this department as professors are the book's co-authors and co-illustrators David Gobel, Patrick Haughey, Daves Rossell, and Karl Schuler.

A great read for students of architecture or architectural history studies, this book would do well in academic libraries. It would also be ideal in public and special libraries for those in the community who take an interest in Georgia history.

Kristi Smith is Catalog/Metadata Librarian at Georgia Southern University, Armstrong Campus