

The Preservation of History in Fairfax County, Virginia*Ross and Nan Netherton*

Lanham, New York and Oxford: University Press of America Inc., 2002

Nations throughout the world are facing the challenging of rapid development, especially in urban areas. Quiet communities have been changed from rural, open areas into crowded urban areas, and historic buildings disappear the world over. This book presents a fascinating look at Fairfax County, Virginia, on the outskirts of the US capital city, Washington, D. C. tackling historic preservation while experiencing rapid physical and demographic changes. The authors, Ross and Nan Netherton, know their subject well having spent 50 years in the area and authored over 15 books together, and almost 40 separately written or edited, on historic preservation. They write a compelling narrative of 35 years of interaction between the Fairfax County History Commission, Board of Supervisors, Park Authority and various individuals and groups in struggles containing cooperation and confrontation, and effectively detail the victories and defeats. The work is rich in charts, discussion of legislation, roster of historic sites, listing of historical publications, naming of significant personalities, as well as organizational and strategic maneuvers. The reader discovers as he or she reads this account that this struggle is going on throughout the world, in thousands of communities facing challenging political and social decisions. Some important lessons are between these pages.

The chairman of the local governing branch, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Katherine K. Hanley in the Foreword notes that the book is “the story of many individual battles, woven into a narrative of a county seeking a prosperous future while preserving the best of the past, and adds that the work can serve as a guide not only for the Virginia county but for other areas as well. Anyone interested in historic preservation will discover great benefit from this case study and may well find it as a model work to present the story of other similarly situated communities.

*Donald J. Senese**The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*

**At the Hands of Persons Unknown:
The Lynching of Black America**

Philip Dray

Random House, 2002

There is no subject that lends itself more to anti-American (and, most recently, anti-white) alienation than lynching. The scenes, after all, were often of the utmost cruelty. No decent individual, sensitive to human suffering, undertakes to defend that cruelty.

It is unfortunate, however, if that means that no one is willing to speak in defense of the mainstream of American society during the century following 1865, placing this very cruel subject in context and perspective. Such a failure leaves the field to those who like to paint the picture of white Americans of that period as one of viciousness, rapacity, unbridled racism, and hypocrisy; and who like to picture blacks as victims who received the brunt of that cruelty.

This latter view has long-since become the conventional wisdom among the opinion-makers in the United States. And elsewhere, as well: this reviewer wrote a legal studies monograph in 1995¹ analyzing the history of lynching and placing it in perspective from a scholarly point of view – and it has been barred from Canada as “hate literature” (an act that is arguably as intellectually disgraceful to Canada as Stalin’s insistence on Lysenkoism was to the Soviet Union). Herbert Marcuse’s prescription, in his discussion of “repressive tolerance,” that all views from the left should be permitted and all from the right prohibited has become reality.

Philip Dray’s new book on lynching fits into that conventional wisdom. Unless one is predisposed to question the Left’s image of white Americans, a reader will be inclined to accept its narrative at face value. Dray has written a readable chronology of lynching, with emphasis especially on the South, and his study is the product of considerable research into the subjects he considers important.

This said, it remains important to note the ways his book lacks perspective. (What follows is a discussion of just some of those ways, since a complete examination of them would go far beyond the scope of a book review):

1. His entire theme (“the lynching of black America”) repeats the

¹ Murphey, Dwight D., 1995, *History of Lynching*, Scott-Townsend Publishers, Washington, DC