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Drayton Hall Stories: A Place and Its People by George W. McDaniel. Charleston, SC: Evening Post Books, 2022. xi + 298 pp.; index; hardback, \$39.95.

The main house at Drayton Hall plantation has stood for nearly three centuries on the banks of the Ashley River in Charleston, South Carolina. It is acclaimed as a notable example of American colonial architecture because it was the first fully executed Palladian building in the nation. Drayton Hall was also a plantation whose owners, the Drayton family, exploited generations of enslaved men, women, and children. The Drayton family sold the site to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1974. It is now operated and administered by the Drayton Hall Trust. George McDaniel, author of *Drayton Hall Stories: A Place and its People*, was the executive director of the Drayton Hall historic site for twenty-five years. In *Drayton Hall* he pulls focus from the long history of Drayton Hall to hone in on and document its more recent history. He has assembled a remarkable collection of transcribed and edited interviews conducted with dozens of people who were engaged in figuring out how to acquire, preserve, interpret, and sustain Drayton Hall in the face of conflicting ambitions for the site and limited financial resources.

An early, significant point of contention was the decision by its new stewards to preserve the main house as it stood at acquisition by the Trust. The Drayton family had not altered the basic architectural style of the building, nor had they added electricity, heating or plumbing by the 1970s. *Drayton Hall* provides important documentation and insights from those involved in that controversial decision and those who have had to shoulder the consequences.

The interviews collected also underscore the challenges of managing evolving expectations for the visitor experience at the site, which is now open to the public. Visitors driven by nostalgia for an idealized, romanticized antebellum white aristocracy must share the site with African Americans, historians, and other visitors pressing urgent claims for more balanced interpretations of plantations. It is a balancing act for the site that I witnessed in August 2017 on a guided tour of Drayton Hall. I was the only African American in the group. Our interpreter stated at the start of the tour that she planned to share the history of both the Drayton family and the enslaved people on the plantation. She proceeded to do so but, at each point in the tour when she began to share history about the enslaved, a white man in our group pointedly turned his back and walked on ahead.

Drayton Hall persevered in its pursuit of a more balanced interpretation and has worked to involve Drayton descendants and those of the enslaved in this work. When McDaniel asked one of the direct descendants of the original owner John Drayton why people should care about this site, she insightfully answered that the site could help people both understand and question its history. Visitors could learn about the range of lived experiences at Drayton Hall, she answered, "from having a guy who had the money and interest in building such a sophisticated 'white elephant' in the middle of this swampy place to the many enslaved people having to do the work of building and maintaining his dream and lifestyle." (62)

It is not a revelation that the work of managing an antebellum historic site associated with chattel slavery can require constant foregrounding, negotiation, mediation, and attempts at resolution of deep, potent points of historic contention that continue to cascade through our contemporary society and public discourse. Drayton Hall includes perspectives from a wide range of people and professionals who have shaped the preservation and visitor experience at this well-known historic site. This is the book's most important contribution to the field and will be of value for students, new professionals, volunteers, and donors.

Although the book begins with a brief history of Drayton Hall from its construction until its sale to the Trust in 1974, McDaniel did not organize the work chronologically. The interviews are organized into three sections: "Family," "Friends," and "Professionals." Each section presents a different lens on Drayton Hall's recent history. They span from the personal reflections of the descendants of both the Draytons and the people they enslaved ("Family") to focusing tightly and in detail on the work of the myriad people tasked with preserving the site and sharing its history ("Professionals"). In between these two sections are the stories of the "Friends" of Drayton Hall. The most compelling and revealing of these are those of the people, including notable key women preservationists and philanthropists, who provided the advocacy and money needed to acquire, preserve, and operate Drayton Hall.

The "Family" section is preceded by two family trees: one being the Drayton line of descent and the other a Bowens family line of descent. The late Richmond Bowens was a descendent of people enslaved at Drayton Hall, and he also worked there after it was purchased by the National Trust. McDaniel interviews both descendant groups about their memories of Drayton Hall and about the potential for Drayton Hall to share fraught history and heal racial divisions. It may surprise readers unfamiliar with the postbellum remnants of the United States' slave societies that, after Emancipation, some enslaved people and their descendants remained in economic and personal relationships with slaveowners well into the twentieth century. The Bowens' enduring historic relationship to Drayton Hall and the white Draytons is not unusual in South Carolina, nor does it provide any evidence or reassurance to white visitors who want to know if the Draytons were "good" masters. Rather, it reflects the economic and human reality of particular cultural landscapes of the rural South in the wake and devastation of the Civil War.

It is not unusual to find Black and white descendant communities near former plantations now operating as visitor attractions. When these sites fail to interpret the lives and contributions of people enslaved at these places, they do so despite the success of sites like Drayton Hall. Drayton Hall, McLeod Plantation (James Island, South Carolina) and Whitney Plantation (Edgard, Louisiana) have all done the difficult work of engaging descendants in shaping their interpretation of the site. The interviews in this section will not be revelatory to most public historians. However, they persuasively do the solid and still-needed work of serving strong medicine and cold rebuke to hold-out historic sites.

It is the "Friends" section that provides a great service to those beyond the field of public history. Americans who take an interest in a historic site often find themselves trying to amass the knowledge, money, and expertise needed to protect the site and develop it into a place for historic interpretation or a museum. McDaniel's interviews with and about Drayton Hall's many benefactors will help community members understand how successful historic preservation projects are accomplished. Historic preservation projects can take many years, are expensive, and require on-going injections of funding to preserve the structure and support programmatic work at the site. The interviews with the many friends of Drayton Hall identify the kinds of allies that are needed for these feats. They also show the immense value that can come from deeply understanding what motivates people to invest both money and time into these projects. This is incredibly valuable information for African American and other minority communities that may lack immediate access to the preservation and philanthropic networks needed to finance these projects.

The "Professionals" section includes many people whose work intersects with Drayton Hall. Historians and historic interpreters, preservationists, tourism officials, architects, business leaders and engineers all get to share their often-unheard perspectives and contributions. McDaniel patiently allows them to describe in detail their substantial contributions. The result is a deep dive and master class on the management, preservation, and interpretation of Drayton Hall that should be used for teaching and training at other historic sites as we expand our understanding of how diverse groups of Americans can be mobilized to preserve and use these sites.

One of the professionals interviewed, African American historian Joe McGill, founded a nonprofit that facilitates sleepovers in historic buildings that were home to enslaved people. His mission is to raise awareness of the need to preserve the remaining slave dwellings on plantation sites in addition to the homes of the white owners such as the main house at Drayton Hall. McDaniel asked McGill to describe his first impression of Drayton Hall. "Magnificent. Architecturally, it demanded its place. In approaching it, it seemed to demand its isolation. However, it was devoid of the stories of those whose labor enabled it to exist. That experience had to have been one of my inspirations to start The Slave Dwelling Project." (275).

*Drayton Hall Stories* has the potential to inspire and then successfully guide many more people from all walks of life into and through the linked projects of advocacy for historic preservation and the field of public history.