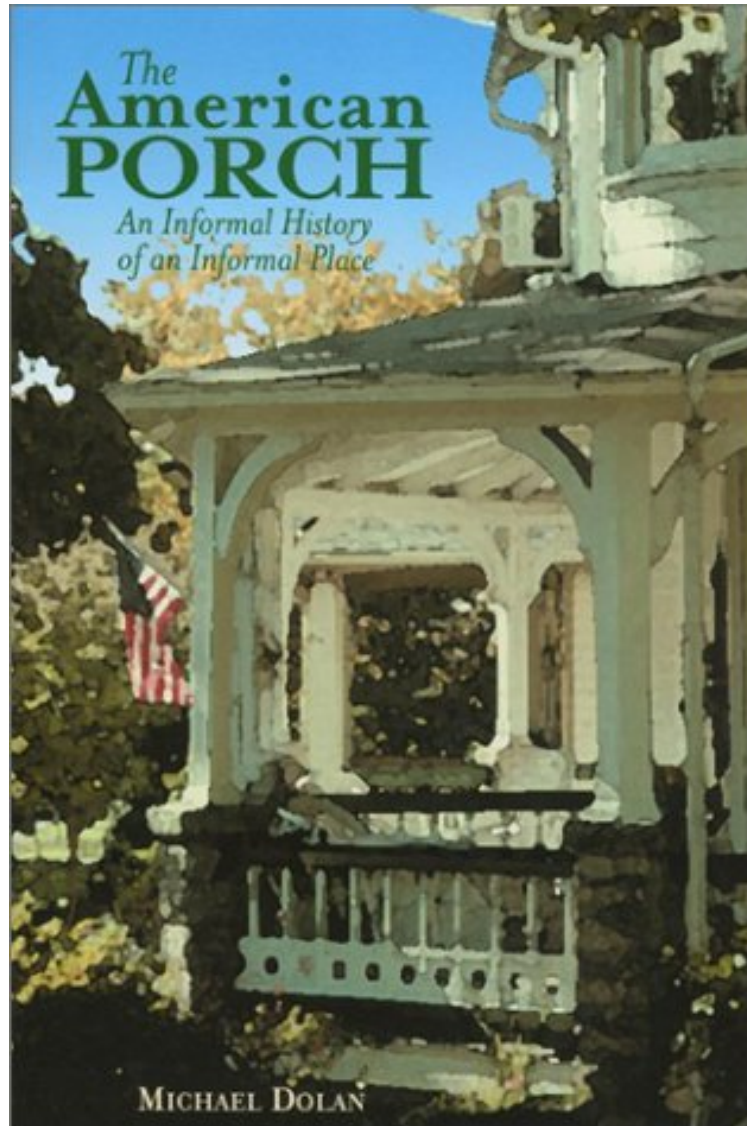


[Download] The American Porch: An Informal History of an Informal Place

The American Porch: An Informal History of an Informal Place

Michael Dolan

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Michael Dolan : The American Porch: An Informal History of an Informal Place before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The American Porch: An Informal History of an Informal Place:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A book about porches? By Alex Clemons This book has plenty of appeal for anyone. A bit of history, politics, social commentary, and comedy transform what could have been a rather sterile topic into a lively review of an iconic piece of American architecture. 7 of 7 people found the following review

helpful. American Porch By A Customer The American Porch is an excellent book. Very well written and researched. The description, "an informal history of an informal place" describes the book perfectly. Lots of pictures, in color and black and white, help illustrate the variety in porch design going back centuries. If you're a homeowner the book will aid you in clarifying your love/hate relationship with the front of your home. Mr. Dolan obviously did some serious thinking about his front porch before he contracted to have it built. (This portion of the book is priceless, in entertainment and insight, if you've ever hired a contractor!) There is ample history about the origin of porches. Those interested in the history of structures and architecture will be pleased with the detail provided. I enjoyed the tidbits of info that Dolan includes like the inside scoop on the "porch picture" on the Crosby, Stills and Nash album cover. (Would they really be the same if they had been called Nash Stills and Crosby?) He covers the history of "decks" and why he hates them from the poison laced timbers to the private suburban backyards the deck created. You'll learn something about yourself reading the American Porch. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Horrible By Bookareok I could not get through this book on my favorite subject. The incoherent ramblings of this book caused me to finally put it down. I tried to skip ahead about half way through and could still find nothing interesting. This author has no self control and thinks that we should be interested in his constant asides that are not at all compelling. I love porches. I have one I wrote essays about them and have done my own extensive research. I was very excited to find that someone had written a book dealing with the history of my favorite architectural idiom and I was very disappointed by this book. The one bit of insight I got from this book is that maybe the dominance of European history and cultural on American society is not a grand conspiracy to oppress marginalized people. It is just a phenomenon caused by lazy writers who would rather travel to Italy than Africa. Dolan mentions that many notable scholars believe that the origins of the porch are found in African dwellings. He describes this for a little while with most of his information coming from a single interview. He then states that Italy also has places that kind of look like porches and then describes for two chapters his trip to Italy to look at porticos. The coverage of the African roots of the porch was at best cursory and done in way that I felt was kind of gross in its part in continuing to marginalize forgotten history. This book is not worth the effort it takes to try to get through it.

A fascinating look at an American institution--a place where public life meets private.

From Publishers Weekly Journalist Dolan's first book describes the development and significance of this durable American symbol of "small-r republican, small-d democratic openness." It turns out that the porch has a diverse lineage, with roots in Mediterranean Europe, West Africa, the Caribbean and India, and a bewildering variety of terms for ancestral or related structures. Indeed, the subject may be too diffuse and elusive for Dolan's approach--an intermediary space between interior and exterior appears to be such a basic element of tropical architecture that one could as easily write a history of the window or the door. It takes a while for Dolan to warm up to his subject, and the early chapters are studded with uneasy speculation and irrelevant byways. Dolan is on surer ground once he reaches the United States--his anecdotes cohere into a narrative, and his analysis of the significance of the porch is more persuasive. Dolan amply demonstrates that the porch is primarily a means of escaping the heat and, almost as important, a locus for casual social interaction. The 19th century was the Golden Age of the American Porch. As Dolan glumly notes, the disappearance of the outhouse and the advent of the automobile were among the factors that caused the front porch to fall into disfavor, almost to complete extinction, during the suburban 20th century. The good news for Dolan and his confreres is that the porch is making an unanticipated comeback. Bw illus.; 32 pages color illus. not seen by PW. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In this delightful look at an American icon, journalist and documentary scriptwriter and producer Dolan traces the history of the porch, using this history to explore subjects such as architecture, history, slavery, colonialism, trade, anthropology, sociology, consumer behavior, and publishing. He begins with an account of remodeling his own front porch and then takes us on an irreverent yet informative tour of the development of the porch, from its origins in ancient Greece and Rome, Africa and India, with stops along the way in Brazil, the Caribbean, Renaissance Italy, Georgian England, and Colonial America. From there, he charts the rise, decline, fall, and reemergence of the porch in America, from Greek revival architecture to plantation culture, from Victorian bungalows to suburban ranch homes, from front porch conversation to air conditioning and television, and from Modernism to the New Urbanism. Throughout, the author supplements his own research by calling upon an impressive array of authorities. Considering the book's accessibility, the amount and quality of its coverage, and the current lack of comparable titles, this is highly recommended for both academic and public libraries. M.C. Duhig, Lib. Ctr. of Point Park Coll. Carnegie Lib., Pittsburgh Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Though many believe the porch is a distinctly American architectural contribution and cultural institution, it actually has its roots in the ancient world. However, Americans have adopted the porch as their own, infusing this homey and humble structure with a uniquely American style and significance. Dolan conducts the reader on a guided tour, analyzing the aesthetic and social history of the American porch. A symbol of welcome and sociability, the porch enjoyed enormous popularity in this nation for more than 200 years. Falling into architectural and cultural disfavor in the mid-twentieth century, porches were demolished in old structures

and eschewed by new construction. However, recent years have witnessed a revival as Americans, nostalgic for a simpler time and way of life, have flocked back to the porch. Dolan interweaves his experiences designing and constructing his own front porch, giving this tribute to an American classic an engaging personal slant. Margaret Flanagan Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved