

**ACCOUNTING FOR THE PAST:
HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS AND AMERICA'S URBAN MIDWEST
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Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2017

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ABSTRACT

Although a sizable subcategory of the nonprofit museum sector, historic house museums have received limited attention in discussions of best practices, most notably in topics of administration, funding, and risk management. Historic house museums serve as a cornerstone of American and international cultural tourism for their accessibility and low, or free, attendance costs. This research argues for historic house museum operations, rather than its period of restorative preservation, as the focus of inquiry. The subjects of this research are three sites that were the products of late nineteenth-century industrialization in the American Midwest, a region under-studied in current literature.

Past scholarship on historic houses has been dedicated to preservation methodology and interpretation. No study of house museums attends to business and legal concerns as well as architectural history and preservation. Utilizing archives, interviews, and financial documents in the analysis of three case studies, I argue that historic house museums provide an illuminating lens onto issues of professional practice facing museums in the twenty-first century.

This dissertation focuses on three historic house museums constructed after the 1876 Centennial and before the turn of the twentieth century. Chapter One offers the

history of the Pabst Mansion in Milwaukee, a German Renaissance Revival structure built in 1892 for brewing magnate Captain Frederick Pabst, and provides a discussion of community funding and post-recession heritage tourism. Chapter Two details the story of the Driehaus Museum in Chicago, a Renaissance Revival mansion built in 1883 for banker Samuel Nickerson and now funded primarily by investor Richard Driehaus. This chapter illuminates the issues of single-donor funding, the problematization of definitions of the historic house museum, and modern development of private art collections. Chapter Three is dedicated to the Samuel Cupples House in St. Louis, a Richardsonian Romanesque residence constructed in 1890 for manufacturing magnate Samuel Cupples and now owned by Saint Louis University, and delves into topics of institutional stewardship and university management of cultural resources. The conclusion proposes a diversification of scholarship concerning historic house museums that embraces financial management to ensure operational sustainability.