



Local Authors: Discover mystique of historic buildings

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Ah, the smell of a musty old house. There's nothing like it. Perhaps it was all the Scooby Doo episodes I watched in my youth that encouraged me to enjoy the mystique of historic buildings.

But it's always reassuring to know I'm not the only one.

Scott D. Butcher, author of "Spooky York, Pennsylvania," released his latest book, "York's Historic Architecture," in November.

The book takes readers on a journey through York City, Hanover, Spring Grove, Shrewsbury, Red Lion and elsewhere to discover some of the oldest and most beautiful buildings, not only in York and Adams County, but in the nation.

The Conewago Chapel, for example, is the oldest stone Catholic church in the United States, built in 1787.

Also featured in the Hanover chapter of the book are the Neas House, the Hanover Post Office, the Young Memorial Library, the Hanover Savings Fund Society, Peoples National Bank, Emmanuel Reformed Church, Eichelberger High School and Sheppard and Myers mansions.

Yet what interested me most are a few York buildings I never noticed before, like the Billmeyer House, an elegant Italianate mansion on East Market Street, or the Emerton Family Home on South George Street. The 18,000-square-foot mansion was built in

1916 and includes a ballroom, formal foyer, library and 18, yes, 18 bedrooms.

Not only are houses featured, but also a museum, prison, bridge, tunnel and more.

Butcher explains in the first paragraph why York County has so many historically and architecturally significant buildings and landmarks.

For one reason, York's history predates the American Revolution. Secondly, York County has produced leaders of business and industry since the 1700s. But the third point that Butcher makes is one that struck me as significant.

"We are kind of stubborn, slow to change," Butcher writes. "While this may not always be a good thing, in the case of architecture, this character trait has helped preserve many central Pennsylvania communities from the wrecking ball of development."

Butcher dedicates the last chapter of his book to "Why Preservation Is Important." Preservation is good for the environment, for one. Contrary to popular belief, historic buildings that are renovated can use less energy and cause less pollution than constructing a new building. In many cases, it also is economically cheaper to renovate an existing building than construct a new one.

But preservation at its heart is about connecting a community to its past, Butcher writes. "In order to know where you're going, you have to first recognize where you have been."

Butcher knows where he's been. As a lifelong York County resident, he now serves as an active member in the community. He's served on the boards of directors for Main Street York, York County Convention and Visitors Bureau and Leadership

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York. He has also served on the board of directors for Historic York Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides historic preservation consulting, education and advocacy services. For more information on Butcher, visit ScottButcher.com.

"York's Historic Architecture," by Scott D. Butcher, is available in York County libraries and online at Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.

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