



Title: The Archaeology of Home: An Improbable Personal History of a Thousand Square Feet on the Lower East Side

Author: Katharine Greider

Description:

The Archaeology of Home tells two intertwining stories, both focused on a single block in Manhattan's East Village. One recalls the author's own years living in an old row house and the real estate debacle, beginning with the discovery of a failed foundation, that brought her tenure there to an abrupt and distressing end in 2002. The other is the epic of those who claimed and relinquished this space before her, from the native Lenape who once fished the East Side's tidal streams to the aging junkie who clung to life as a squatter in the building's basement during the late 1970s. In the course of telling her own story, Katharine explores the nearly universal rhythm of migration and settlement, the meanings of home, the mythic and psychological significance of house and neighborhood, and the keen, self-interested fascination we seem to share in real estate as wealth. In telling the 400-year story of people attaching themselves to and remaking this place through time, she shows how we lay the map of our own inner worlds onto the environment, and how we all live in the ruins of someone else's world.

Reviews

Booklist:

Most of us have a home in an older structure yet rarely ponder its past. Over 11 chapters and 44 pages of endnotes, Greider constructs the 'improbable memoir and epic history' of one New York address, 239 East 7th Street, describing its series of inhabitants, all craving the security, boundary, and history that is home. With control and confidence, Greider tells her personal narrative while excavating an enormous cast of characters and their connections to and journey through one building in the Lower East Side that comes to represent Manhattans evolution. An astonishing, complex, yet easy-to-digest tale. Greider succeeds brilliantly in magnifying 239 -- its tenants, structure, and surroundings -- so thoroughly that we feel its grit, then zooming out to reveal 'multitudes dancing on the head of a pin' -- the macrocosm that is home, city, humanity.

Library Journal:

Well written and thoroughly researched, this sobering tale should resonate with many readers of our time who have also lost their homes, leaving them asking, "How could this happen to me" While the book will certainly interest urban historians, it will appeal even more to home owners wanting clues about how to research the past of their own

homes. Recommended.

Mark Caldwell, author of *New York Night: The Mystique and Its History* and *A Short History of Rudeness*:

In *The Archaeology of Home* Katherine Greider tells the story of her tragi-comic love affair with a beautiful but ill-starred house on Manhattan's Lower East Side, interweaving deft personal memoir with a scholarly history of the house and an illuminating commentary on the nature and meaning of home over the course of human history.

LibraryThing Early Reviewers:

The Archeology of Home is an absolutely fabulous book. Greider does an amazing job of interweaving the story of her own property into that of greater New York. What she accomplishes is an urban history that will be equally enjoyable to the preservationist, urban historian, or general reader.

This book serves a great general introduction to New York History, while encouraging the reader to investigate the subject even further. In telling the story of her family's trials involved with this old home, she masterfully peels back layer upon layer of history that exist upon this site.

I hope to see this work featured in New York bookshops, notably the Tenement Museum Shop upon my next visit.

The Archaeology of Home deftly sews together the history of early Colonial America, domestic architecture, geography, immigration and autobiography into one highly-readable account of the author's former home at 239 East 7th Street on the Lower East Side of New York City. To travel through time and document the lives of those who lived in the house -- and on the site -- for over two centuries before the author herself did is a massive endeavour, but one she does successfully thanks to meticulous research and attention to detail. In doing so, she brings the house's long-dead former residents to life. It's an impressive achievement, and made for yet another great read for me from LibraryThing's Early Reviewers.

Greider jumps back and forth in time between past and present, and her meticulous research and accessible writing bring alive the various characters who lived in the house and the neighbourhood from the 1600s to the 2000s. Highly recommended.