

## The Museum in America: Innovators and Pioneers

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*The Museum in America: Innovators and Pioneers*, by Edward P. Alexander. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997. 224 pp. Bibliographies, notes, index. \$42.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY J. R. CHRISTIANSON, LUTHER COLLEGE

Edward Porter Alexander, born in 1907 in Keokuk, graduate of Drake University and the University of Iowa, and a towering figure in the museum world of the twentieth century, is still going strong at the age of ninety. His latest book focuses on thirteen innovators in American museums.

Who got the idea to reassemble fossil skeletons instead of keeping the bones in drawers? Who perfected the mounting of animals in habitat groups? Who were the three New York women who started the Museum of Modern Art in rented space with a loan exhibition? Who started the pioneering programs in museum education at Harvard and the University of Iowa? How did Anna Billings Gallup make the Brooklyn Children's Museum so much "pure fun" that children hated to leave? How did John Kinard create a new kind of community-based cultural center in a "storefront" museum?

Alexander has the answers. He tells these stories and eight others with warmth and energy, adding new personal portraits to those in his *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence* (1983). His chapter on historical societies mentions Iowa while focusing on the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which Alexander headed before moving to Colonial Williamsburg. Nobody with an interest in museums should miss this book or the earlier writings of Edward P. Alexander.

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