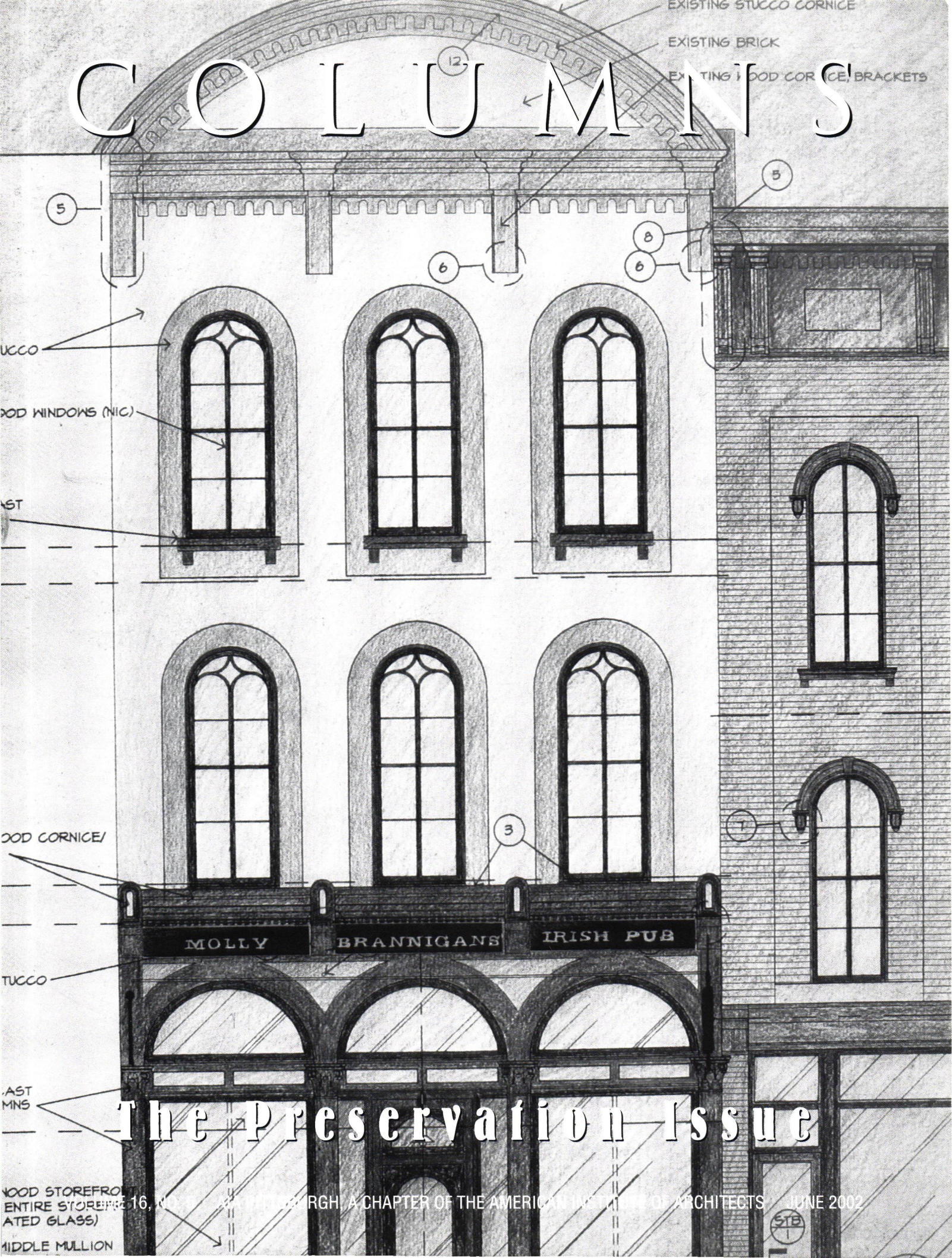


# C O L U M N S



EXISTING BRICK  
EXISTING STUCCO CORNICE  
EXISTING WOOD CORNICE, BRACKETS

5 6 6 8 8 5

STUCCO  
WOOD WINDOWS (NIC)  
ST

WOOD CORNICE/

STUCCO

WOOD STOREFRONT  
ENTIRE STOREFRONT (GLAZED GLASS)  
MIDDLE MULLION

## The Preservation Issue





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## Notes on Some Recent Reads By Tracy Certo



*"Carnegie liked New York. He liked the lack of heavy industry, the fact that mills and plants and factories did not clutter the landscape but had been consigned to locations elsewhere."*

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**On the cover:** Adaptive reuse of two downtown Erie 1857-59 Italianate commercial buildings into retail space and offices. Crowner King Architects.

### By coincidence, the two books I've been

reading while working on this preservation issue mention Pittsburgh of old. The first is a minor but vivid passage in the compelling book, *A Beautiful Mind*. Author Sylvia Nasar describes the city as John Nash arrives from rural Bluefield, West Virginia to attend Carnegie Tech in 1945:

*"With its smelters, power plants, polluted rivers, and ubiquitous slag heaps, Pittsburgh was a city of violent strikes and frequent floods. So dense was the sulfurous haze that engulfed its downtown that travelers often mistook morning for midnight. The Carnegie Institute of Technology, perched halfway up Squirrel Hill, hardly escaped the inferno. The ivory-colored brick of its buildings—designed, or so students said, to serve as factories should Andrew Carnegie's school fail—were glazed yellow black. Its walkways were gritty with soot particles the size of pebbles. Its students were forced, before a lecture was half over, to brush the cinders from their lecture notes. Even at high noon in midsummer, one could stare directly at the sun without blinking."*

At that time, Carnegie Tech president Robert Doherty "had seized the opportunities created by wartime to turn the engineering school into a real university," writes Nasar. In addition, corporate giants like Westinghouse gave scholarships to lure talented students to CT. A sidenote here: The year Nash entered the school he was in very good company, with an extremely bright and prominent group of mathematicians—as well as a local artist named Andy Warhol. During his studies at what would later become Carnegie Mellon University, Nash originated his game theory.

Another good read, *In Sunlight In A Beautiful Garden*, is an account of the Johnstown Flood of 1889. Fictional characters and situations are mixed in with non-fiction and legends such as Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Mellon and Andrew ("Put all your eggs in one basket then watch the basket") Carnegie. Throughout this highly descriptive and captivating book, we get some delicious insight into these men.

To wit: When Andrew Mellon was 25, he returned from a trip to Europe to T. Mellon and Sons Bank on Smithfield St. with a new eye, an eye accustomed to the chic city of Paris. *"He had seen how sunlight could make roofs shimmer. The bank building, which his father had designed and*

*built himself, which had once seemed so magnificent to him, with its four imposing stories, the arched windows crowned with cornices and keystones, the dark stained hardwood paneling that made the lobby so inexplicably imposing, now seemed like the product of too much effort. He thought it imitative, an expression of a failed attempt to beautify."*

Makes you wonder what would he think of the building now that it's a department store. In the same book, I was jolted by this gem about Carnegie, upon moving to New York with his mother: "Carnegie liked New York. He liked the lack of heavy industry, the fact that mills and plants and factories did not clutter the landscape but had been consigned to locations elsewhere." Holy sulfurous haze, such irony!

The book, by Kathleen Cambor, focuses on the events leading up to the devastating flood, which occurred on Memorial Day. Once the water burst through the dam at the South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club, it took an hour for it to reach Johnstown.

During that time, *"A black mist, 'a death mist' as it was later called, hovered over it as it collected barbed wire, locomotives, railroad tracks, pulverized frame houses, keys and hobbyhorses, window glass, factory boilers, fuel. At spots where the valley narrowed, the water wall grew to seventy feet, and more than once it blocked itself. A debris dam formed, and the killing wave paused, briefly, as if to reconstitute itself, as if accumulating force for its movement forward."*

There's more, just as intense. Our local history is fascinating and always makes for interesting reading. In this issue we focus on preserving history—the good parts, that is—from understanding historic designations to features of some award winning restorations. Pittsburgh is rich in historic buildings in all its urban areas. Much work is being done and there's still much more to do. In Erie, which we spotlight here, urban renewal in the late 50's destroyed many of the downtown buildings. That makes all the restoration projects, some of which we feature, that much more valuable.

In the meantime, summer is approaching so if you're looking for some good books, I recommend the two mentioned here. Happy reading.