



The Portland Red Guide: Sites & Stories of Our Radical Past

by Michael Munk
Ooligan Press, 2007

Reviewed by: Emily-Jane Dawson

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I have a great love for my hometown, Portland, Oregon. It is a pedestrian sort of city in many ways, and its glamour is a little faint when compared to really fabled places — cities that have starred in films and been the inspiration for renowned works of literature. But, part of why I love Portland is that I am connected to it. I live here, and I am a part of its history. I remember businesses that are long gone, houses and neighborhoods that have been replaced with parking lots or road infrastructure, streets that once had different names, and parks that used to be sketchy but are now squeaky clean. However, my own memories go back only thirty years or so, and though Portland is a young city by most measures, thirty years is not so much of its history.

So I need a little help if I want to be truly well-versed in the details of what the buildings used to hold, why the parks and streets have the names they do, and what the neighborhoods were once like before everything changed. *The Portland Red Guide* is one place to go for help in this quest. Michael Munk spent dozens of years researching Portland's history for tiny jewels — terse little stories of personalities, organizations, and institutions; of strikes and parties, criminal trials and cultural events; of parks, storefronts and streetcorners — all located simultaneously in the physical, historical, and cultural landscape of the city.

One quite startling thing *The Portland Red Guide* illustrates is the number of intact, surviving buildings and streetscapes that once hosted a slice of radical history. Pictures really bring this home: Lownsdale Square (between SW 3rd and 4th Aves. and across from the Multnomah County Courthouse) is shown in several historic photographs as the location of public meetings of Portland's branch of the Communist Party; a beautiful 1950's-era street scene shows the gay bar The Harbor Club (at 736 SW 1st Ave., in a building that is still with us); and houses once lived in by Portland's most noted radical daughters, Dr. Marie Equi and Louise Bryant (at 1423 SW Hall and 226 NE 53rd Ave., respectively) still stand and look downright normal in their photographs.

Munk divides Portland's history into six chronological periods (from the late 19th century through Halloween, 2006), and for each he provides a brief introduction; a list of people, places, institutions and events; a map situating them in the city; and a selection of photographs. The book closes with an excellent bibliography of books on Portland's history and an index. 🐥



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