

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

While studying with Henry Glassie this last summer, I was stricken with a severe case of Kniffenian diffusionitis, a disease familiar to material cultists. One of the major symptoms is a painful desire to know the type and origin of every architectural structure you come across, and so the search begins. Near my summer residence, on a street otherwise filled with white frame, end-gable roofed, be-porched, double-doored Southern Indiana houses was, without question, an Eastern, urban, flat-roofed, two-story, two-rooms-deep row house. It was even made of red brick. Just the one stood there, no others, and all the others on either side of the street were of sufficient age to convince me that no other house of this type had ever stood there. Operating on several vaguely defined hypotheses (1. that no one would consider a row house the ne plus ultra in aesthetic achievement; 2. that people really do haul more of their culture around with them than is often apparent to those who believe that tradition is being/has been killed off by urban acculturative factors, and 3. that the material medium does have a message), I set out to trace the biography of the row house. From one of the present renters to the realtor who owns the place (and half the town) to another realtor to my landlady to a man across the street I went. Finally, my search for truth ended with an eighty year-old gentleman who had once rented the bottom half of the place from the people who had built it--the DeFranzioni's from, you must have guessed, Newark, New Jersey. They came to Bloomington after World War I, found a contractor who could and would build such a house, and opened a delicatessen in the bottom half. Of course, they lived upstairs. During Prohibition, Mr. DeFranzioni made wine and sold it to thirsty Hoosiers thereby making a good deal of money. He rented his house and built another out in the country. His family still owns the second, an ordinary Southern Indiana type, but they sold the first. The search being over and my vague hypotheses having been confirmed, my soon-to-become-chronic diffusionitis was arrested--temporarily.

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NOTES FOR QUERIES

Our erstwhile editor, E. Oring, who became our Near East correspondent when we sent him to Israel to cover the joke cycles of the next war, cables, fresh from a collecting trip: "The only good piece I got all day was from the busdriver who drove us down there. We were standing around waiting for the people... so we could get going. I said I had been told 4:45 PM. He said he had been told 4:30. He started complaining about the lack of communication and the faulty links in the chain of command and said, 'It's like the sultan who was in his palace, and it was during the shamsin /a wind that makes the weather very hot / and he commanded his vizier to bring him ice cream. Well, the command went from one vizier to the next and the order finally got down to the kitchen, and by the time the ice cream got back up to the sultan it was boiled. ' "

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