



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University
DigitalCommons@SHU

History Faculty Publications

History Department

Spring 2010

Evelyn Aschenbrenner. A History of Wayne State University in Photographs (Book Review)

Julie Mujic

Sacred Heart University, mujicj@sacredheart.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/his_fac

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mujic, Julie A. "Evelyn Aschenbrenner. A History of Wayne State University in Photographs" (Book Review). *Michigan Historical Review* 36.1 (2010): 129-130.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the History Department at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact ferribyp@sacredheart.edu.

Evelyn Aschenbrenner. *A History of Wayne State University in Photographs*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009. Pp. 304. Appendices. Photographs. Cloth, \$39.95.

Wayne State University (WSU) alumna and freelance writer Evelyn Aschenbrenner compiled this book to fulfill her own curiosity about the evolution of Wayne State University's campus in Detroit, Michigan. The institution grew out of several smaller specialized schools (primarily medical and teaching) that trace their roots back to the immediate post-Civil War era and the early twentieth century. After gaining state university status in 1956, WSU has continued to grow despite the challenges of Detroit's struggling economy. Aschenbrenner divides the school's history into six chapters, spanning the years 1868 to 2008. She reveals how university officials turned their vision of an urban campus into a reality. Each chapter contains large, clear black-and-white photographs illustrating the construction of campus buildings and the removal of old structures and homes that allowed WSU to expand. Aschenbrenner also documents how the surrounding area responded to this development. Charles K. Hyde contributes the contextual introduction outlining WSU's institutional history, and he stays well within Aschenbrenner's goal of keeping the university's infrastructure at the center of the story.

Overall, there is no historical argument in this book; however, the author has captioned each photograph appropriately, except for one error in a date in the caption of the Harper Hospital photo on page twenty-five. Unfortunately, the book does not contain a complete list of photographs, nor does the author number the photographs. The problem with this approach is illustrated on page thirty-three, when the author refers to "figure 1.13" in a caption, but the reader cannot easily determine which figure that is as none of the photographs are numbered. Apparently, the reference is indeed the thirteenth picture in the chapter, but to determine this, the reader must count off thirteen photos from the beginning of the chapter. Aschenbrenner also does not indicate why she selected these particular photos. Outside of those images credited to Wayne State University, the sources of the other photographs are not given.

Additionally, it would be interesting to know why the administration kept changing its focus, shifting back and forth from an emphasis on undergraduate, residential students to privileging graduate and professional education. This pedagogical vacillation seemed to drive years of building construction. During one phase, WSU built more classrooms and research labs. Then, under a new president who wanted to shift the university's reputation from commuter school to residential campus, WSU built dormitories and recreation centers. Aschenbrenner does not explain the reasons behind these adjustments. Also, an analysis of the obvious diversity among students in the photographs would have been intriguing. It seems from the pictures that race relations were always harmonious--that blacks and whites roomed together, marched together, and laughed together. It would be interesting to know more about actual individual and group interactions in different eras on the WSU campus.

A History of Wayne State University in Photographs illustrates the mammoth task of creating and sustaining a competitive university under the restraints of space and money; however, as the book's back flap implies, ultimately Aschenbrenner has created an attractive coffee-table book.

Julie A. Mujic, Kent State University