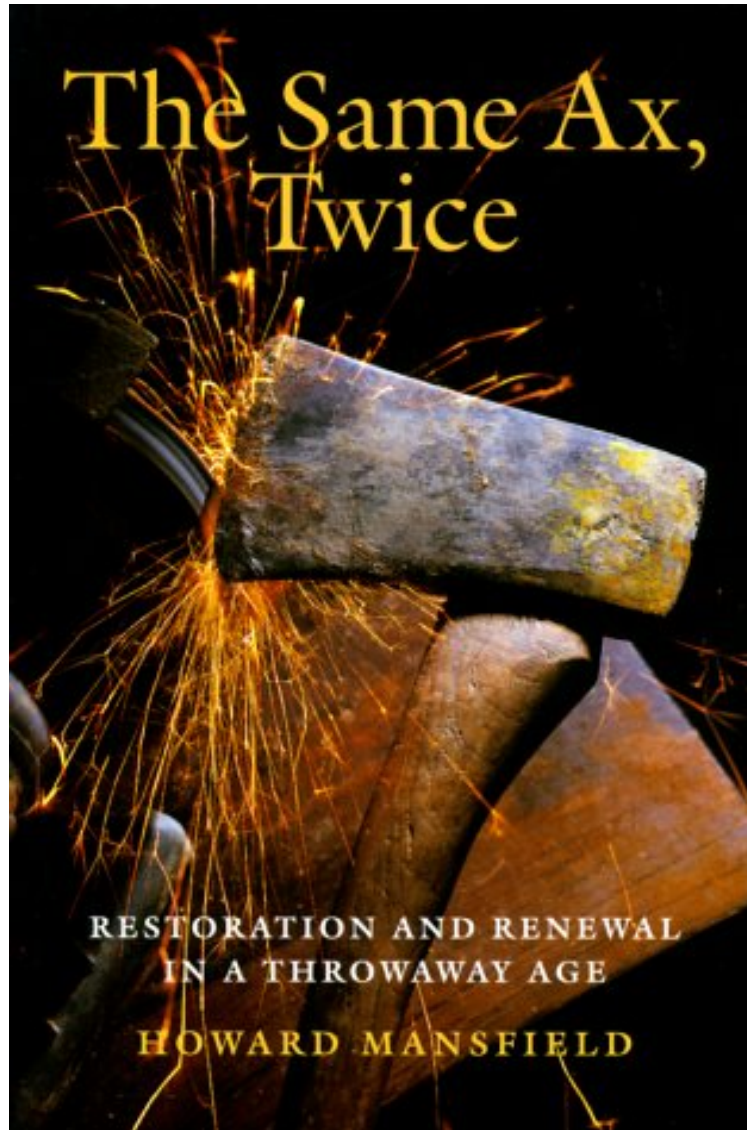


(Download ebook) The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age

The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age

Howard Mansfield

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Howard Mansfield : The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A quiet book that foments revolution.By A reader in New EnglandIn remaking an ax, in restoring a house, we carry the fire of the original spirit. We commit anew, plant, put our hands to touch the work of a craftsman hundreds of years gone, and then once again feeling that work, pick it up again. And therein lie renewal and hope." --from The Same Ax, Twice.Moving easily between meditative reflection and

compelling insights, Howard Mansfield offers lively descriptions of some of the extraordinary people who are imaginatively, lovingly, sometimes obsessively, realizing their own visions of the restorative impulse. Mansfield immerses himself deeply in the search for restoration. He travels with Civil War reenactors to help recreate the Battle of Antietam; he enrolls in auctioneer school to observe the endless recycling of artifacts, and he compares the process to the sterile preservation of these same objects in displays and museums; he observes the ongoing work of preserving the USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," a ship which has been replaced over the years board by board. The act of restoration, Mansfield concludes, whether it's rebuilding antique engines or reviving the village model of community organization, must contain an element of renewal. Rejecting the sentimentality of nostalgia and the superficiality of commercial images, Mansfield argues for an understanding of restoration that is as much concerned with the future as it is with the past, that preserves and communicates a spirit as well as a form. "The Same Ax, Twice is filled with insight and eloquence... a memorable, readable, brilliant book on an important subject. It is a book filled with quotable wisdom," said The New York Times Book Review. "The Same Ax, Twice is one of those quiet books that foments revolution," said William Morgan in Boston Architecture. "Howard Mansfield has just the right combination of erudition and humor to challenge conventionally held ideas about historic preservation. Like *In the Memory House*, his wise 1993 exploration of the New Englander's defining relationship with the past, *The Same Ax, Twice* ought to be on your bookshelf along with Wendell Berry and Noel Perrin." "I know I will never think about any part of the past--including my own--in quite the same way ever again. Mansfield just blew me away with this truly remarkable, engaging and yes, inspirational piece of work," said Judson D. Hale, Sr., publisher of Yankee Magazine. "The best restorations,' writes Mansfield, 'are truly restorative.' Reading this book is equally so," said Publishers Weekly. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. book review By restorevt Great book at a great price. Wanted to order 3 but the link was difficult to navigate and I only was billed for 1 and only received 1.8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. treasure trove By elizabeth thomas Once again, Howard Mansfield has produced a brilliant book, as intelligent as it is vital, to show how our heritage is as much a part of us as is our DNA. We struggle to keep it going in a manner suggested by the title, which refers to a well-known story of a man with an ax. The handle breaks and the man replaces it, whereupon the ax head breaks and the man replaces that too. Does the man then have the same ax, or does he have a new one? An argument could be made either way, but the important aspect of the story is that the man has the ax he needs and has never been without it. For us, the world is our ax, and is breaking apart even as we watch. We want to mend it. We want to keep what we are losing, so we carefully move old houses from the paths of bulldozers, board by board and brick by brick; we form large societies to reenact battles of the Civil War, the armies outfitted in exact regalia down to the buttons. Such ongoing activity is not the same as the collections of relics found in museums (such as a stoppered vial containing Thomas Edison's last breath, for instance, a relic that Mansfield mentions by contrast.) We are closer to Thomas Edison when we replace a lightbulb than we are when we look at this vial of his breath. If the owner of the ax of the title had wanted a relic, he would have kept his broken ax to look at and acquired a new one to chop wood. No--he mended his old ax. And with our restorational activities, we are trying to mend the word, something that we human beings long to do with every fibre in us. Environmental magazines seem not to have noticed this important fact, nor have any of the preservationist publications. In contrast, Mansfield shows us something extremely important about ourselves in this brilliant and very readable book.

An old farmer boasts that he has used the same ax his whole life -- he's only had to replace the handle three times and the head twice. In an eclectic, insightful meditation on the powerful impulse to preserve and restore, Howard Mansfield explores the myriad ways in which we attempt to reconnect with and recover the past -- to use the same ax twice. Mansfield's *In the Memory House* (hailed as a "wise and beautiful book" by the New York Times) explored the complex interconnections of memory and place, showing how the loss of a sense of place in our ever more mobile society has profoundly impoverished our collective memory. Now he tracks our need to reconnect with place and memory. Moving easily between meditative reflection and compelling insights, he offers lively journalistic descriptions of some of the extraordinary people who are imaginatively, lovingly, sometimes obsessively, realizing their own visions of the restorative impulse. Mansfield himself is deeply engaged in the search for restoration. He travels with Civil War reenactors to help recreate the Battle of Antietam; he enrolls in auctioneer school to observe the endless recycling of artifacts, and he compares this process to the sterile preservation of these same objects in displays and museums; he tours 18th-century houses that have been variously restored to their "original" condition or stripped to their essence; he observes the ever-ongoing work of preserving the USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," a ship that has been replaced over the years board by board. The act of restoration, Mansfield concludes, whether it's rebuilding antique engines or reviving the village model of community organization, must contain an element of renewal. Rejecting the sentimentality of nostalgia and the superficiality of commercial appropriation, Mansfield argues for an understanding of restoration that is concerned as much with the future as it is with the past, that preserves and communicates a spirit as well as a form.

From Publishers Weekly A cross between Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic* and James M. Lindgren's

Preserving Historic New England, this volume delightfully investigates Americans' penchant for fixing up old stuff. New Hampshire journalist Mansfield (*Skylark: The Life, Lies, and Inventions of Harry Atwood*) introduces readers to engineers who spend their spare time trying to replicate the Wright brothers' original plane; to devotees of historic Deerfield (a colonial village come to life in Massachusetts); and to the tourists who visit places such as the Shaker Village in his hometown of Hancock, N.H., and Graceland. He eavesdrops on gravestone restorers musing about 17th-century slate headstones and provides tips for preserving photographs and furniture. (Don't place nectar-dripping flowers in a vase you want to last; blot--don't rub--at alcohol spilled on furniture; don't drag furniture if you care either about the chair or your floorboards). Similarly, Mansfield investigates the meaning of Old Home Day orations and auctioneers' rhythmic cadences and provocatively contrasts New England villages--of yesterday and today--with gated communities in the suburbs. Our fixation with restoration, he concludes, has meaning beyond the idle fascination of rich folks with nothing better to do than fix up old trunks and sleigh beds. Rather, as his subtitle suggests, we find renewal in our reclaiming of objects from the past. "The best restorations," writes Mansfield, "are truly restorative." Reading this book is equally so. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* This meditation, which explores the nature of memory, history, and restoration, carries forward Mansfield's thesis from *In Memory's House* (1993) that a defining New England characteristic is the conviction that we choose our past. The title refers to a farmer who respects an ax so much that he replaces both blade and handle twice. Thus, the axe is both the same and totally different, the conclusion being that rebuilding an object accurately uncovers its essence. Through richly layered essays, Mansfield argues that only through living with the past can we keep it alive. Otherwise, as rootless beings we will inhabit a sterile, disposable world. The author parades before the reader numerous people and the things they have preserved, from a builder reassembling historic homes to a farmer preserving land for future generations. This beautiful, haunting work about people laboring to keep history's spring flowing is highly recommended for collections dealing with restoration and related issues. -Nigel Tappin, Dwight, Ont. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Filled with insight and eloquence . . . A memorable, readable, brilliant book on an important subject. It is a book filled with quotable wisdom." -- New York Times Book