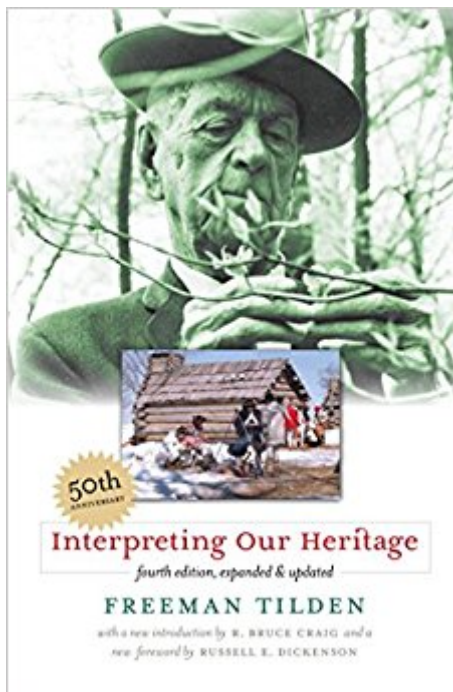


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# Interpreting Our Heritage



## Synopsis

Every year millions of Americans visit national parks and monuments, state and municipal parks, battlefields, historic houses, and museums. By means of guided walks and talks, tours, exhibits, and signs, visitors experience these areas through a very special kind of communication technique known as "interpretation." For fifty years, Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* has been an indispensable sourcebook for those who are responsible for developing and delivering interpretive programs. This expanded and revised anniversary edition includes not only Tilden's classic work but also an entirely new selection of accompanying photographs, five additional essays by Tilden on the art and craft of interpretation, a new foreword by former National Park Service director Russell Dickenson, and an introduction by R. Bruce Craig that puts Tilden's writings into perspective for present and future generations. Whether the challenge is to make a prehistoric site come to life; to explain the geological basis behind a particular rock formation; to touch the hearts and minds of visitors to battlefields, historic homes, and sites; or to teach a child about the wonders of the natural world, Tilden's book, with its explanation of the famed "six principles" of interpretation, provides a guiding hand. For anyone interested in our natural and historic heritage--park volunteers and rangers, museum docents and educators, new and seasoned professional heritage interpreters, and those lovingly characterized by Tilden as "happy amateurs"--*Interpreting Our Heritage* and Tilden's later interpretive writings, included in this edition, collectively provide the essential foundation for bringing into focus the truths that lie beyond what the eye sees.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] seminal book which may inspire yet another generation of park rangers." -- "Reflections"

Bruce Craig gives us cause to look at Freeman Tilden's life and writings with fresh eyes, fostering renewed appreciation for his masterful work and his passion for interpretation.--Evie Kirkwood, president, National Association for Interpretation

At first glance Tilden's principles seem simple and direct, but on reflection they are as paradoxical and poetic as the process of interpretation itself. This expanded edition of Tilden's writings is sure to make interpreters realize how Tilden speaks to us even today and continues to challenge us to do our best.--Scott Mair, coordinator of environmental education, Capital Regional District, Victoria, BC, Canada

The interpretive profession continues to embrace Freeman Tilden and his classic text because he exemplified 'the priceless ingredient'--loving the thing you interpret and the people who come to enjoy it. This fiftieth anniversary edition is a chance to rededicate ourselves to the unfinished interpretive task--to ensure that future generations have abundant opportunities to connect to the meanings and significance of the special places for which we serve as stewards.--Theresa G. Coble, Stephen F. Austin State University

Interpreting Our Heritage is the defining work that firmly established Interpretation in the National Parks as a professional, equal, and unique component of NPS park management. This new edition of Tilden's seminal work will continue to influence and inspire all interpreters, serving as a vital interpretive training reference for another fifty years.--Michael D. Watson; chief of interpretation, NPS (1987-1992), and superintendent, Stephen T. Mather Training Center (1992-2006)

[A] seminal book which may inspire yet another generation of park rangers.--Reflections

Since opening its doors in 1964, the National Park Service's Stephen T. Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, has introduced each attending NPS Interpreter to Freeman Tilden's interpretive philosophy and principles. From 1967-1970, Tilden personally trained the NPS interpretive workforce as a center instructor, honing and expanding his ideas and impact among fellow interpreters. Interpreting Our Heritage is the defining work that firmly established interpretation in the National Parks as a professional, equal, and unique component of NPS park management. This new edition of Tilden's seminal work will continue to influence and inspire all interpreters, serving as a vital interpretive training reference for another fifty years.--Michael D. Watson; chief of interpretation, NPS (1987-1992), and superintendent, Stephen T. Mather Training Center (1992-2006)

That our marvelous national parks are vital to Americans' collective heritage is due in no small measure to the interpretive magic of Freeman Tilden. His inspiring message is amplified and lent current salience by Bruce Craig. It is a delight to be

reminded that appreciating our legacy comes, first and foremost, from being provoked into loving it.--David Lowenthal, Emeritus, University College London, author of *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, and *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation*

I do birdguiding and recently while looking for literature about guiding I stumbled upon the , for me new, concept of interpretive guiding. although around for more then one hundred years I never came across the term. It opened up a new world for me and gave purpose to my guided tours in a structural way I never used before. This book from Freeman Tilden describes and illustrates the essence of interpretive guiding and is just as valid today as when it was written half a century ago before we even reached the moon. I think this book should be read by everyone who is into guiding , be it in nature, a museum or exhibition and up the game into interpretation instead of mere guiding and reciting facts.your customers will be happier and you will be more satisfied with your work

Freeman Tilden was an advocate of environmental education and is considered the originator of interpretation movement within national and state parks. This latest edition includes a new introduction section that gives a background of Tilden's life and thought processes, which sets the stage nicely for Tilden's writings. The theme book is based on the mission of "interpretation" as given by NPS director Conrad Wirth in 1953, "protection through appreciation, appreciation through understanding, and understanding through interpretation."Throughout the book, Tilden defends interpretation as an educational activity. What I find most interesting is the fact that Tilden's strategies for success as an interpreter in parks also apply to natural science classrooms. First of all, Tilden states that the aim of interpretation should be "to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, or by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information." Inquiry-based learning, usually in the form of original research projects, should be the foundation of science classes, not rote memorization. In Tilden's mind, our national, state, or city parks are the best and greatest natural classrooms for teaching individuals the basics of ecology.Finally, Tilden understood the importance of meeting individuals where they are, no matter their age. "The visitor's chief interest is in whatever touches his personality, his experience, and his ideas. Students must be engaged before they can learn. Tilden supported formalized environmental education for primary school students. However, he knew that we did not have to wait another generation. "We must reach adults, by spoken or written words," Tilden stated. As an educator, it is really easy to blame previous grade levels for a student's lack of

knowledge. Tilden would agree that blaming others is a waste of time. Educators of all types should meet students where they are, regardless of age, and engage them in science using nature's principles. The principles of this book still ring true today. If you are interested in any type of wildlife education or science education in general, I would recommend this book.

The first chapter of this book is essential reading for anyone interested or working in heritage interpretation. In the first chapter Tilden posits 6 principles of interpretation. Tilden argues that heritage interpretation must first and foremost be relevant to the visitor. Interpretation is informative, but more so it aims to provoke thought and emotion; in other words, to resonate with the visitor. Interpretation is an interdisciplinary art that is teachable. It should aim at presenting a whole narrative, rather than relating informative fragments. Lastly, interpretation for children should not be a distillation of a presentation for adults, but rather a separate and distinct interpretive approach. The following chapters are enjoyable to read and offer a deeper insight into Tilden's interpretive philosophy. I particularly appreciated the extent to which Tilden's theories were inspired by Transcendentalist philosophy, especially the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Readers: If you read this then it is sure you are not acquainted with Mr. Tilden's Book. This text, now in reprint, is the Standard Work for those involved with presenting the Past to the Present. Though written decades ago, originally for the N.P.S., its value has not been diluted with the passing of time, and its lessons carry beyond the bounds of the National Park Service Instructional Courses, for which it is written. Much of the text is devoted to non-historical sites, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite Park &c. but there is much that can be 'borrowed' and applied to Historical Sites, such as Mt. Vernon, Montpelier &c. Mr. Tilden's '6 Rules of Interpretation' alone, are worth the price of the Book. This writer will state, without reservation, if you are new to Historical Interpretation or are a Guide at some Natural Feature; or an 'old hand' who never owned a Copy of this Book; that you Buy a Copy Right Now, read it, mark it well, take some liner notes, and then apply them to your work with the Public; the Public will surely gain from your increased ability to communicate the Message of your Location For the Record, this writer received the Book as a gift from his wife, even though he had been an Historical Interpreter for years. And this writer has gained much from that gift. Thus Ever I rest  
MR. Charles Anthony Volunteer-in-the-Park, Minuteman, National Historical Park, Concord, Mass./Saratoga, N.H.B. N.Y.S. 74th Regt. Argyle Highlanders, 1777-1784 (Recreated) Docent, 1755 Captain William Tate's House, Portland, Maine

It's a great introduction to the art of interpreting. It's very easy to read (english ain't my native language) and I get the feeling, it was done with a lot of passion. I'm a tourist guide in Colombia, and I find this book to be of supreme help on my work.

What more can I say, Tilden is the expert in Interpretation. Although this book is a bit dated, I wish he were still around to revise this book. Great other wise, perfect for anyone looking for information about Interpretation.

A terrific book. Freeman Tilden is brilliant and I will refer to this for years to come. Great shipping service too!

For school

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