## CONTENTS

**From Noblesse Oblige to Nationalism**  
**Elite Involvement in Planning Canada’s Capital**  
DAVID L. A. GORDON  

**Dirty Work and Clean Air**  
**Locomotive Firemen, Environmental Activists, and Stories of Conflict**  
DAVID STRADLING  

**The Federal Icarus**  
**The Public Rejection of 1970s National Suburban Planning**  
NICHOLAS BLOOM  

**Review Essays**  

**Scandinavian Childhoods**  
MADELEINE HURD  

**Moral Spaces in the Burckhardtian City**  
WILLIAM H. LECKIE, JR.  

**Constructions of the Social**  
GERRY KEARNS  

**California Cities and the Transformed Landscape in the Twentieth Century**  
DAVID IGLER  

**Early Modern Urban Britain**  
**Regions, Themes, and Types**  
KEITH LINDLEY  

**Contributors**  

**Call for Proposals or Papers**
The editors of JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY are receptive to varied methodologies and are concerned about the history of cities and urban societies in all periods of human history and in all geographical areas of the world. The editors seek material that is analytical or interpretive rather than purely descriptive, but special attention will be given to articles offering important new insights or interpretations; utilizing new research techniques or methodologies; comparing urban societies over space and/or time; evaluating the urban historiography of varied areas of the world; singling out the unexplored but promising dimensions of the urban past for future researchers.

MANUSCRIPTS should be submitted in triplicate to David R. Goldfield, Editor, JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY, Department of History, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC 28223. E-mail: drgoldfi@email.uncc.edu. Articles should be no more than 30 typewritten double-spaced pages, with footnotes, references, tables, and figures on separate pages. Footnotes and bibliography citations should follow the American Historical Association style, but italics will be used for book titles only. A copy of the final revised manuscript saved on an IBM-compatible disk should be included with the final revised hard copy. A brief biographical paragraph describing each author’s current affiliation, research interests, and recent publications should also accompany the manuscript. Since manuscripts are reviewed anonymously, the author’s name and affiliation should appear only on a separate covering page. Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in the journal. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal, nor should manuscripts have been published elsewhere in substantially similar form or with substantially similar content. Authors in doubt about what constitutes prior publication should consult the editor.

EVALUATION OF MANUSCRIPTS involves the anonymous submission of contributions to at least two referees. Comments by the referees are advisory to the Editor and are transmitted anonymously to the author with a decision concerning publication. Every effort is made to complete the evaluation of manuscripts within three months. Manuscripts that have been submitted simultaneously for review by other journals will not be considered.

BOOKS FOR REVIEW should be sent to Timothy Gilfoy, JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY, Department of History, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60626. Potential contributors of review essays are invited to correspond with Professor Gilfoy.

JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY (ISSN 0096-1442) is published six times annually—in November, January, March, May, July, and September—by Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; telephone (800) 818-SAGE (7243) and (805) 499-9774; fax/order line (805) 375-1700; e-mail order@sagepub.com; http://www.sagepub.com. Copyright © 2001 by Sage Publications. All rights reserved. No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without written permission of the publisher.

Subscriptions: Regular institutional rate $395.00 per year, $70.00 single issue. Individuals may subscribe at a one-year rate of $75.00, $20.00 single issue. Add $12.00 for subscriptions outside the United States. Orders with ship-to addresses in the U.K., Europe, the Middle East, and Africa should be sent to the London address (below). Orders with ship-to addresses in India and South Asia should be sent to the New Delhi address (below). Noninstitutional orders must be paid by personal check, VISA, or MasterCard.

Periodicals postage paid at Thousand Oaks, California, and at additional mailing offices.


Back issues: Information about availability and prices of back issues may be obtained from the publisher’s order department (address below). Single-issue orders for 5 or more copies will receive a special adoption discount. Contact the order department for details. Write to the London office for sterling prices.

Inquiries: Address all correspondence and permissions requests to Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, California 91320. Inquiries and subscriptions from the U.K., Europe, the Middle East, and Africa should be sent to Sage Publications Ltd, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, United Kingdom. From India and South Asia, write to Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, P.O. Box 4215, New Delhi 110 048 India. Other orders should be sent to the Thousand Oaks office.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by Sage Publications for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) Transactional Reporting Service, provided that the base fee of 50¢ per copy, plus 10¢ per copy, is paid directly to CCC, 21 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970. 0096-1442/2001 $5.00 + .10.

Advertising: Current rates and specifications may be obtained by writing to the Advertising Manager at the Thousand Oaks office (address above).

Claims: Claims for undelivered copies must be made no later than six months following month of publication. The publisher will supply missing copies when losses have been sustained in transit and when the reserve stock will permit.

Change of Address: Six weeks' advance notice must be given when notifying of change of address. Please send old address label along with the new address to ensure proper identification. Please specify name of journal. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Journal of Urban History, c/o 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320.
FROM NOBLESSE OBLIGE TO NATIONALISM
Elite Involvement in Planning Canada’s Capital

DAVID L. A. GORDON
Queen’s University

The selection and planning of Canada’s capital was directly influenced by its governors-general during the nineteenth century. Queen Victoria’s representatives provided the leadership on this issue until the prime ministers of the young country began to show some interest at the turn of the century. Under their influence, the objective of planning for Ottawa changed from creation of a comfortable viceregal outpost to design of a capital that would inspire pride among Canadian citizens. This article examines the role and motivation of the governors-general and prime ministers in planning Canada’s capital from 1850 to 1950, largely drawn from their personal papers, diaries, and archived documents.

Canada has had a governor-general or governor as resident representative of the Crown since the early days of European settlement. Early governors had considerable executive power, but after Confederation in 1867, they were empowered to govern according to the wishes of the elected prime minister. The position gradually evolved into a ceremonial role as head of state, not involved in politics. The head of government is the prime minister, who is typically the head of the majority party in the House of Commons.1 The Queen’s representative during the latter half of the nineteenth century was typically a British nobleman with an interest in promoting ties to the Crown and Empire. Several governors-general also vigorously promoted Canadian unity and identity, touring the young country and encouraging cultural and sporting activities with their patronage. These interests sometimes resulted in viceregal initiatives in the planning of Canada’s capital.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: This article is based on archival research contributed by Aidan Carter, Emma Fletcher, Aurélie Fournier, Tiffany Gravina, Michael Millar, Jerry Schock, Daniel Tovey, Miguel Tremblay in Ottawa, and Inara Silkalns in Chicago. The research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Advisory Research Committee of Queen’s University, and the Richardson Fund. Professors Gilbert Stelter, John Taylor, Larry McCann, Ted Regehr, and Joan Draper kindly shared their ideas and research papers, while Eugenie Birch introduced the field of planning history. Many librarians and archivists helped, but special thanks should go to Marc Bisaillon at the National Archives of Canada, Rota Bouse at the National Capital Commission, and Mary Woolever at the Art Institute of Chicago.
The Canadian governors-general had many European precedents for the planning of capital cities in the nineteenth century. A broad movement planning for all cities emerged in the late nineteenth century, with an emphasis on urban design, parks, public health, and social reform. Capital cities were often the location of these early experiments, especially if the seat of government was in the largest metropolitan area. City-planning ideas associated with architectural and social reform crossed the Atlantic Ocean in both directions in the first half of the twentieth century. As new countries were created during this period, a trend emerged to plan new capitals (Canberra, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Brasilia) or replan existing cities (Washington, Rome, Berlin) as expressions of national power and identity. The planning of national capitals became more complex, both symbolically and practically.

This article is narrowly focused on the actions of the governors-general and prime ministers in planning the Canadian capital from 1823 to 1970, with particular emphasis on 1850 to 1950. It is concerned mainly with planning and urban design, only briefly touching on the important role of the Department of Public Works in the architectural design and construction of federal buildings. Similarly, the local government’s planning history is addressed only in passing, since John Taylor’s work covers this ground so well.

Although extensive public participation in major urban planning decisions has been standard practice for the past thirty years, it is still somewhat surprising to discover the extent of direct personal interventions by some governors-general and prime ministers in the planning of Canada’s capital until 1950. Ottawa (founded as Bytown in 1826) was not even the first choice as the seat of government of the United Canadas. Governor-General Lord Sydenham personally selected Kingston as the first capital in 1840, rejecting the competing claims of Quebec City, Montreal, and Toronto. Bytown was also rejected because it was “so very small a place, would require such vast increase of Buildings & is altogether so remote from thickly settled Districts.” Bytown’s reputation as a somewhat lawless frontier town may also have hurt its chances.

The legislators never accepted Sydenham’s choice, complaining constantly about the poor accommodations and rent gouging. The young Charles Dickens judged Kingston a very poor town, rendered still poorer in the appearance of its market-place by the ravages of a recent fire. Indeed, it may be said of Kingston, that one half of it appears to be burnt down, and the other half not to be built up. The Government House is neither elegant nor commodious, yet it is almost the only house of any importance in the neighbourhood.

No efforts were made to plan or improve Kingston as the seat of government. Lord Sydenham soon had reason to regret the rough conditions of the capital’s streets when his horse stumbled and fell on him in September 1841. The governor-general died within a few weeks. His successor, Sir Charles Bagot, disliked Kingston from the start, but he also died within a year. Sir Charles
Metcalfe fared little better, wasting away from cancer after his arrival. Although Kingston was hazardous to viceregal health, it was the legislature, not the governor-general, that took the initiative to transfer the capital to Montreal in 1844.¹²

Montreal seemed like a poor choice as capital when a mob, angry about the Rebellion Losses bill, burned the legislature building and stoned Governor-General Lord Elgin as he made his escape. The legislature then entered a perambulating stage, alternating between Toronto and Quebec every four years (see Figure 1). The disadvantages of this arrangement were soon recognized, but the politicians were simply unable to agree on a city. They finally referred the question of the location of the seat of government to Queen Victoria to arbitrate the issue.

AVOIDING THE QUEEN’S CHOICE

Once again, the governor-general played an important role. Sir Edmund Head sent a confidential memorandum to the queen, recommending Ottawa as the choice for Canada’s capital:

Ottawa is the only place which will be accepted by the majority of Upper and Lower Canada as a fair compromise. With the exception of Ottawa, every one of the cities proposed is an object of jealousy to each of the others. Ottawa is, in fact, neither in Upper or Lower Canada. Literally it is in the former; but a bridge alone divides it from the latter.¹³

Head was realistic enough to understand that the lumber town at the head of the Rideau Canal had significant drawbacks.

The main objection to Ottawa is its wild position, and relative inferiority to the other cities named. But this wild position is a fault which every day continues to
diminish. The present population may be called 8,000 or 10,000, not of the best
description.14

Lady Head may also have influenced the decision—she sketched several views
of Ottawa during an 1857 summer excursion. According to local legend, one
sketch showing the vista toward Barracks Hill was included with her hus-
band’s dispatch.15

The land for the canal locks and the bluff admired by Lady Head were avail-
able as a result of an act of foresight by Governor-General the Earl of Dal-
housie. He purchased four hundred acres on the south bank of the Ottawa
River for £750 in 1823, three years before the Rideau Canal was authorized. Lt.
Colonel John By laid out a town site at the head of the canal and reserved the
bluff for Crown use, initially placing his troop barracks on the hill.16

Development of Canada’s national capital could not start with a vacant site
and a new plan, similar to Washington, New Delhi, Canberra, or Brasilia.
When Queen Victoria made her choice in 1857, there were more than 10,000
people living in the town. There was no immediate need for a plan for the new
seat of government, since Barracks Hill was the obvious site for the parliament
buildings (see Figure 2), and there seemed to be plenty of Crown land available
for future expansion.17 Perhaps another reason why no plan was prepared for
the new capital was that few of the legislators cared for the place. While Ottawa
may have been everybody’s second choice, it was nobody’s first choice either
as a capital or as a place to live.

The legislature at first refused to adopt the Queen’s choice. Members of leg-
islature dragged their heels on the bills to build the parliament buildings,
derunderfunding the project and then stopping the work for an investigation when
cost overruns exceeded the appropriation.18 The politicians and civil servants
managed to avoid meeting in Ottawa for almost a decade.19 The first session
was held in 1866, only a year before confederation with Nova Scotia and New
Brunswick. Luckily for Ottawa, the huge public expenditure on the parliament
buildings made it difficult to reopen the issue of the capital’s location.

Governor-General the Viscount Monck hated Ottawa from the start.

It seems like an act of insanity to have fixed the capital of this great country away
from the civilization, intelligence and commercial enterprise of this Province, in
a place that can never be a place of importance and where the political section of
the community will live in a position of isolation and removed from the action of
any public opinion. My confident belief is that Ottawa will not be the capital four
years hence.”19

Monck refused to travel by the rutted dirt track leading from the governor-
general’s residence at Rideau Hall to Parliament. He kept a small boat to travel
on the Ottawa River instead. Monck joked with Fanny Meredith, wife of one of
the first deputy ministers, about joining him in a plot to blow up the new parlia-
ment buildings so they could be rid of the place.21 Lord Dufferin, who followed
Monck as governor-general, also preferred Quebec and spent as much time as possible there. The Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise tried to improve the area around Rideau Hall (see Figure 3), but Queen Victoria’s daughter returned to Britain in 1880 after she was injured when their carriage overturned on a rutted road.

The antipathy of the legislators and governors-general is not surprising, because Ottawa was a dreadful place in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Most of the buildings outside Parliament Hill were of indifferent wood construction (see Figure 4). Beyond the ugly appearance of the place, the new capital initially had none of the utilities found in a major city of the day: no paved streets, no sewers, no gaslights, and no piped water supply. These services were the responsibility of the local government, which could hardly complain, since it had vigorously pursued the capital a few years earlier. Urban services were slowly installed over the next decades, but a pure water supply was a particular problem: Ottawa suffered through a deadly typhoid epidemic in 1911, after part of the system was poorly installed.

The considerable natural beauty of the site was marred by the lumber and pulp industries in the late nineteenth century. The Chaudière Falls were dammed to provide power for the adjacent pulp mills, sawmills, and match
Figure 3: The "Princess' Vista" Cut through Rockcliffe Park to the Ottawa River, directed by Princess Louise, 1878

Figure 4: View across Wooden Ottawa to Parliament Hill, circa 1867
SOURCE: National Archives of Canada, C-1185, Samuel McLaughlin, photographer.
factory. The banks of the Ottawa River were covered with piles of sawed lumber, while the river itself was often choked with huge booms of logs. These lumber piles contributed to the destruction of almost half of Hull and 14 percent of Ottawa in a major fire in 1900.25

Although living in Ottawa may have been disagreeable for most of the civil service,26 it was considered a hardship post by the viceregal couples of the day. Lady Dufferin described Ottawa as

a small town, with incongruously beautiful buildings crowning its insignificance. A very bad road leads to Rideau, which is a long, two-storied villa, with a small garden on one side of it and a hedge which bounds our property on the other—so at this time of the year there is really no place to walk.27

Perhaps it is not surprising that the politicians and governors-general paid so little attention to the capital during its first years, since they spent perhaps only one-third of the year in Ottawa, fleeing as soon as parliamentary sessions ended. There was no official residence for the prime minister until almost a century after Queen Victoria made her choice. Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, owned a variety of houses in his native Kingston,28 but he purchased Earnscliffe, his Ottawa residence, in 1883, a quarter century after Ottawa was selected as the capital.29

Ottawa was a one-industry town in the mid-nineteenth century, and that industry was lumber, not government. The politicians and 350 civil servants occupied only the picturesque triptych of gothic buildings on Parliament Hill. The legislators typically boarded in hotels, and the civil servants barely made a dent in the society of “one of the roughest, booziest least law-abiding towns in North America.”30 The governors-general and their wives toured the country constantly, filling their diaries with accounts of Canada’s natural wonders and spending as much time as possible in the more civilized confines of Montreal and Quebec.

WASHINGTON OF THE NORTH?

The official neglect of Canada’s capital began to change in the spring of 1893, with the arrival of a new governor-general, Lord Aberdeen. Perhaps more important, his energetic wife, Ishbel Gordon (1857-1939), accompanied him to Ottawa. A fervent Liberal and supporter of Gladstone, Countess Aberdeen was perhaps the first activist viceregal consort.31

The Aberdeens, like those before them, were disappointed by Ottawa. In January 1895, Lady Aberdeen noted, “We are very sorry to leave Montreal. Ottawa means exile emphasized, accompanied by a feeling of hopelessness. Happily Ottawa does not mean Canada, nor does it represent Canada.”32 However, rather than staying away from the city as much as possible, Lady Aberdeen
decided to make the best of an imperial bad lot. “As Montreal is now hopelessly lost as a capital, everything possible should be done to push Ottawa.”

Lady Aberdeen found an ally in her quest to improve the capital in Wilfrid Laurier, the new leader of the Opposition. Laurier (1840-1919) did not have a good early impression of the capital, writing to his confidante, “Here I am chained to this detested place for many weeks to come.” When Laurier arrived in Ottawa for the national convention of the Liberal Party on June 19, 1893, he was met by a crowd of supporters at the station. Speaking from the back of his Pullman car, he addressed the assembly, ending with

I consequently keep a green spot in my heart for the city of Ottawa, and when the day comes, as it will come by and by, it shall be my pleasure and that of my colleagues I am sure to make the city of Ottawa as attractive as possibly could be; to make it the centre of the intellectual development of this country and above all the Washington of the north.

The speech made headlines in the newspapers and left an indelible impression on many of those who heard it. Laurier repeated his promise when he arrived in Ottawa in August 1896 as newly elected prime minister. “Washington of the North” became the slogan for Ottawa’s improvement as a national capital. Laurier also made a personal commitment to the city by purchasing a house in downtown Ottawa, which remained his family residence until his death in 1919.

Wilfrid Laurier and his wife Zöe became friends of the Aberdeens and collaborated with them on Ottawa’s improvements. The countess invited the Lauriers for a picnic on Nepean Point in the fall of 1898. They dreamed of making Ottawa a better capital, as noted in one of the last entries in Lady Aberdeen’s diary:

I must own to beginning to feel quite a sneaking fondness for the place itself, in spite of its shabby old Government House put away amongst its clump of bushes & in spite of dirty old tumble down Sussex Street, to drive over which always needed an effort, although it was an effort almost daily repeated.

Perhaps this fondness is not altogether unconnected with a scheme for a grand improvement of Ottawa which lies very near our hearts & which if carried out would make her one day a very queen of capitals. The idea is to get a [town] plan made & adopted. . . .

Sir Wilfrid is quite taken with the idea & came over the place with me to inspect it one day. . . . He was not only enthusiastic about it but seemed to think it possible to undertake at a much earlier date than we had ventured to hint at. We only said “Look fifty years ahead” get a plan made whereby such a scheme may ultimately be developed & which will prevent eyesores of buildings being put up meanwhile & thus preventing it.

Mr. Fielding [finance minister] says “Get Ottawa put under a Commission like Washington & I am with you”. Probably he is right for the Ottawa civic authorities have not been very wonderful up to now.
It took less than a year for Laurier and Finance Minister W. S. Fielding to put Lady Aberdeen’s scheme into motion. On August 11, 1898, the Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC) was formed, with Fielding introducing the bill to Parliament. The OIC was granted $60,000 per year and reported directly to the minister of finance. Its first chairman was Sir Henry Bate, the local businessman who had welcomed Laurier to Ottawa on the day he made his “Washington of the North” promise.

Both Laurier and Fielding took a personal interest in the work of the commission. At first, there was general acclaim for its work. The OIC cleared the west bank of the Rideau Canal and built a parkway that both was popular and improved the view when entering the capital by train. Parks were built or enlarged along the Rideau and Ottawa rivers, and several small parks in the city got their first landscaping.

The OIC also improved a downtown avenue and built two bridges across the Rideau River to provide a circuitous route connecting the governor-general’s residence to Parliament Hill. The new greenery sprouting throughout the city delighted its citizens and the Laurier government. The OIC’s budget was increased to $100,000 per year in 1910, and the prime minister continued to aid it by personally lobbying the Canadian Pacific Railway to donate land for a park. Although the prime minister was satisfied with the work of the OIC, criticism of Ottawa planning gradually grew in the first decade of the century. Surprisingly, much of the criticism was sponsored by a Laurier appointee to the OIC and a new governor-general.

AN IMPERIAL CAPITAL?

The Fourth Earl Grey (1851-1917) may have inherited his reform instincts with his title; he was the grandson of a famous Whig prime minister of Britain. The fourth earl was a staunch promoter of the British Empire, and he was also a patron of several English town-planning movements before being appointed governor-general of Canada in 1904. Grey inaugurated Letchworth, the first garden city, and served as a member of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust for more than a decade. Both the new governor-general and Lady Grey closely followed Ottawa planning issues and personally designed some of the vistas in Rockcliffe Park.

Grey next pushed plans for a new downtown hotel and for extending Sussex Street along the Ottawa River as a parkway. He advocated placing a first-class hotel east of Parliament Hill on Nepean Point, which he regarded as a superior site to that of the Château Frontenac in Quebec. Laurier preferred a hotel located across from the main railway station at the entrance to Major’s Hill Park (see Figure 2). He arranged for the OIC to receive $100,000 from the purchase of the site for the hotel to improve the remaining park. The first phase of the hotel, now known as the Château Laurier, opened in 1912.
While the prime minister prevailed on the hotel, the Greys succeeded in pushing the OIC to build an improved parkway connecting to the viceregal residence along the crest of the embankment on the Ottawa River. The new road was named Lady Grey Drive when it opened in 1914.

The governor-general was also dismayed by the absence of a comprehensive plan for improvements to the national capital. In 1903, the OIC had commissioned Montreal landscape architect Frederick Todd (1876-1948) to prepare a preliminary plan for Ottawa’s parks and parkways. Todd had trained in the office of Frederick Law Olmsted and became one of Canada’s first landscape architects and town planners. He prepared a comprehensive plan for the open-space system of the national capital, including the first proposal to acquire Gatineau Park in Quebec. Unfortunately, the OIC chose to ignore the report and proceeded with incremental additions to the Ottawa parks without the guidance of architects, planners, or landscape architects.

Grey built support for better planning by inviting some of Britain’s leading town-planning advocates to speak in Ottawa as part of North American tours. Raymond Unwin, codesigner of Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb, visited Ottawa in 1910. His public address made several tactful suggestions as to how the national capital might be improved.

English landscape architect Thomas Mawson was less discreet during his visits. He was complementary about Ottawa’s splendid natural setting but publicly criticized the OIC’s work as “rustic work, . . . curly walks, sprawling patterns or specimen trees and shrubs. Now, really, why do you do this sort of thing? How can you admire it?” Mawson vigorously pursued a commission to plan Canada’s capital, returning to the city on several occasions to give public lectures.

Grey personally sponsored a cross-country speaking tour by Mawson and Henry Vivian, a member of Parliament and advocate of social reform and garden cities. The trip was profitable for Mawson, who won commissions in Regina, Banff, Calgary, and Vancouver on his western trip, but the Ottawa prize eluded him.

During his final days in office, Governor-General Grey redoubled his efforts to procure a plan for Canada’s capital city. He wrote to Sir Henry Bate, the OIC chairman, enclosing his copy of Mawson’s planning textbook and inquiring about various park land acquisitions and advocating a comprehensive plan:

I shall be leaving Ottawa in a few days now after nearly 7 years residence among you, and I confess it will be rather humiliating to me, if I go away feeling that for want of a sufficient imagination and belief in the greatness of Ottawa’s future, and of proper effort, that ideal plateau [Rockcliffe Park], which cannot at any cost be duplicated elsewhere, has been lost to the Nation, and vulgarized and destroyed by the erection thereon of private houses.

I hope also that before I go I may have the satisfaction of knowing that the necessary steps have been taken for the preparation of a plan in relief of the City,
and of the surrounding country within a radius of 5 miles; and for the calling in of professional advice for guidance as to the way in which this all important Federal City of Ottawa should be laid out.54

The letter concludes with an extraordinary example of a governor-general threatening a publicly appointed official:

I hope, when I make my farewell speech to the Canadian Club on September 27, I may be able to state that both of these steps, which I consider so vital to the future dignity and majesty of the Federal City have been taken. Unless I receive this assurance I shall consider it my duty to take the people into my confidence, and to give them a parting message, in which I fear it may be necessary for me to express my regret that splendid opportunities for safeguarding and promoting the future beauty of the City have been lost notwithstanding the influence of my strong and continual pressure over several years in the opposite direction.55

Bate’s response is not known, but Grey made no mention of Ottawa planning in his farewell speech later that week.56 Grey did not give up, even after he left the capital. As he steamed along the St. Lawrence River in his private rail car, he sent one last letter to the new prime minister, Robert Borden, criticizing the OIC and advocating the purchase of more land on the Rockcliffe plateau:

I hold the view strongly that the Bronson and Keefer Plateau has a position of such unique importance that it is the duty of the present authorities, if they desire to safeguard the interests of posterity, to secure it from being appropriated by private owners to exclusive uses.57

Grey got his last wish. The OIC purchased forty acres of land on the plateau and landscaped it as an extension of Rockcliffe Park, which is still in use today.58

Earl Grey left Canada shortly after Robert Borden’s Conservative Party defeated Sir Wilfrid Laurier’s Liberals in the September 1911 general election. Laurier had held office during the entire first decade of the OIC, and he continued to defend the actions of his appointees as leader of the Opposition.59 The OIC clearly had a special place in his heart: “If that I should relinquish my present position, I shall simply go into private life. There is only one position that I could accept, and it would be to become a member of the Improvement Commission of Ottawa.”60

It is not clear whether Borden (1857-1937) had any previous interest in the planning of Canada’s seat of government, but he was thrust into the issue during his first week of office. In addition to pressure from Earl Grey, the new prime minister was pursued by C. P. Meredith, a local architect and recent appointment to the OIC.

Colborne Powell Meredith (1874-1967) had impeccable credentials as a member of English Canada’s elite. His mother was Fanny Jarvis, a member of
a prominent Toronto family, and his father was Edmund Allen Meredith, first
undersecretary of state for the Dominion of Canada. Coly Meredith grew up
in Ottawa, and unlike his parents, he actually liked the city.

In 1910, Meredith was young, aggressive, and well connected. Laurier
appointed Meredith to the OIC despite his Conservative background, perhaps
because he was active in the executive of the Ontario Architectural Association
and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). The commission
had become a bit stodgy by 1910, but even if Laurier wanted the young
Meredith to stir things up, he got more than he bargained for.

At his first OIC meeting, Meredith recommended that the commission sus-
pend all its operations pending a review. At his second meeting, he recom-
mended that a first-rate landscape architect be retained to prepare a plan for the
commission. No commissioner would second his motions.

The other members of the OIC made a tactical mistake by shutting out
Meredith, who was independently wealthy and politically connected. He
quickly demonstrated that he could make a great deal of trouble for the com-
mission. He started a well-coordinated lobby to destroy its members’ reputa-
tions and take control of a new plan for the nation’s capital.

Meredith was aided by Noulan Cauchon (1872-1935), an Ottawa engineer
with a French-Canadian family background almost as impeccable as
Meredith’s. Cauchon’s father was J. E. Cauchon, former mayor of Quebec,
speaker of the Canadian Senate, and lieutenant governor of Manitoba. Noulan
married into the Lemoines, one of Quebec’s oldest and wealthiest families.
Although he trained as a surveyor and railway engineer with the Canadian
Pacific Railway, Cauchon developed an intense interest in town planning by
1910. He published hundreds of articles on his schemes for replanning the area
in the Ottawa Citizen, where he was a regular correspondent.

Earl Grey and Prime Minister Borden seemed content to let Meredith and
Cauchon destabilize Laurier’s OIC, which was still popular for building the
new parks and driveways. While Cauchon published critical newspaper arti-
cles, Meredith attacked the OIC’s poor planning and design through Grey’s
visiting experts and the provincial and national architectural associations.
Meredith briefed Raymond Unwin before his 1911 Ottawa visit. He also
formed a loose affiliation with Thomas Mawson and coached his criticism of
the OIC during Mawson’s Canadian tours. After Grey’s departure, Mawson
and Meredith lobbied both Borden and the new governor-general, the Duke of
Connaught, for the contract to prepare a new plan for Ottawa.

Meredith chaired the 1912 RAIC convention in Ottawa and made the plan-
nning of the nation’s capital its primary theme. The RAIC passed several
motions condemning the past practice of the federal government and sent a
delagation to the prime minister’s office to lobby Borden personally. The con-
vention issued a memorandum on the need for a comprehensive plan prepared
by professionally trained designers. Meredith’s objective was an elite com-
mision of technical experts to supervise preparation of a comprehensive plan.
This model was based on Washington’s successful experience with the 1903 Senate Parks Commission, which was well known at the time.\textsuperscript{70}

Borden proceeded cautiously. At Meredith’s request, he met Mawson in New York in late 1911, only two months into his term.\textsuperscript{71} However, the prime minister’s staff also made discreet inquiries in London about Mawson’s qualifications. The results were, at best, damnation with faint praise. The government quietly dropped the idea of directly commissioning Mawson.\textsuperscript{72}

The town-planning advocates kept up the pressure to act, and the federal and municipal governments decided to lay the groundwork for a plan by commissioning Noulan Cauchon to prepare a topographic survey of Ottawa.\textsuperscript{73}

As the pressure on Borden continued to mount, he turned Meredith’s lobbying to his political advantage. After Mawson’s attacks, Sir Wilfrid Laurier defended the OIC in Parliament, claiming that the commission had been guided by the long-forgotten 1903 Todd Report.\textsuperscript{74} Meredith responded by sending Borden a detailed and confidential memo that took apart the Todd report section by section, criticizing the OIC’s action on each point in the severest terms:

\begin{quote}
The Commission has, from the first, carried on its work in a most unbusinesslike way, and persists to continue doing so notwithstanding all the criticisms that have been made, and are content to have the general park scheme, the engineering work and the designing of structures requiring artistic training done by a so-called superintendent, who is nothing more than a bricklayer.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

The prime minister asked for permission to include Meredith’s analysis in a government policy paper on Ottawa planning. Meredith agreed, either not understanding the furor his remarks would cause or perhaps relishing it. The policy paper included the RAIC memoranda, the criticism of Unwin and Mawson, the entire text of the Todd report, and Meredith’s damning critique.\textsuperscript{76} It was front-page news in the Ottawa newspapers, with headlines like “Merciless Analysis of Commission’s Work.”\textsuperscript{77}

The OIC responded by issuing a beautifully printed report, lavishly illustrated with pictures of its new parks and driveways.\textsuperscript{78} The OIC co-opted Frederick Todd by commissioning him to landscape two derelict blocks opposite Robert Borden’s new Ottawa home. The OIC named the new park Macdonald Gardens, after the first Conservative prime minister. The commission also sent its workmen to improve the grounds of Borden’s home. The prime minister may have been flattered, but he continued to cut the OIC out of future planning initiatives.\textsuperscript{79}

Meredith, Mawson, and Cauchon intensified their lobby for an expert commission to prepare the new Ottawa plan following the 1903 Washington model. However, their many public statements on poor planning in Ottawa appear to have cost them the confidence of the prime minister’s office.\textsuperscript{80} Borden wanted a process that was under his direct political control rather than
an independent panel of expert professionals. Senior staff discreetly assembled a group of prominent Conservative businessmen to act as a planning commission, which was chaired by Herbert Holt, president of the Royal Bank.\textsuperscript{81}

The federal government attempted to co-opt the local governments by appointing the mayors of both Ottawa and Hull as ex-officio members of the new Federal Plan Commission (FPC). Adding Hull to the FPC’s mandate was an astute political move, since the Quebec side of the Ottawa River had realized few benefits from Ottawa’s designation as the seat of government and had received little attention from the OIC.

Borden briefed the Duke of Connaught on the composition and mandate of the FPC. Despite Mawson’s flattery, the new governor-general appears to have had little interest in the work.\textsuperscript{82} Meredith began to sense that the control of the prized plan was slipping away from him. After the FPC interviewed prominent American planners, Mawson cabled the prime minister, suggesting that an English landscape architect be hired for the job:

\textit{Rumour says commission favours U.S.A. landscape architects if so respectfully suggest and urge that this preference would cause Englishmen and Canadian [sic] keenest disappointment for in this department Britain rightly claims longest traditions highest attainments and most practical grasp of this many sided problem we consider Ottawa presents Empire most notable opportunity.}\textsuperscript{83}

However, the prime minister declined to intervene on behalf of the British Empire, and within a month the FPC had retained Edward H. Bennett of Chicago as its consulting architect and planner.\textsuperscript{84} Meredith was outraged and sent the prime minister an inflammatory letter of resignation from the OIC:

\textit{In closing may I be permitted to lodge a strong personal protest against the appointment by the Town Planning Commission of a Chicago designer as the technical expert who is to replan Ottawa. I have the greatest admiration for much of the work of our southern neighbours, but it seems absolutely farcical and contrary to all our national spirit, Canadian, British, Imperial, that a citizen of the United States should be chosen to lay out the surroundings of the seat of government of the Dominion of Canada. Had there been no other landscape designers available the case would have been different, but there are men in Canada and men in Great Britain quite as eminent as Mr. Bennett, who appreciate and reverence our British ideals, and who are entirely capable of transmitting those ideals, and civic expression. In neglecting to consult these men the Town Planning Commission has cast a slur on the profession. In appointing a citizen of the United States it has slandered our nationality.}\textsuperscript{85}

The \textit{Ottawa Citizen} attacked the commission’s choice of an American planner and ran Cauchon’s damning review of Bennett’s first speech on the plan.\textsuperscript{86} Ironically, Bennett (1874-1954) was born and raised in England and educated at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He was responsible for several major plans, including the landmark 1909 \textit{Plan of Chicago}, coauthored by Daniel Burnham. In the absence of capable Canadian planners, Bennett’s
English heritage, French education, and American experience made him perhaps uniquely suited for the Ottawa-Hull commission. He prepared a plan for the capital in the City Beautiful style (see Figure 5) but with comprehensive technical planning for infrastructure and zoning.

Prime Minister Borden appears to have been content to let the FPC get on with its job, for there is no further record of his involvement with the FPC. The prime minister had more urgent concerns in 1914 after Canada entered World War I. Although the Borden government tabled the FPC report in Parliament in March 1916, it quickly disappeared from sight. The Centre Block of the parliament buildings had burned a few weeks before, and rebuilding it would absorb any funds the government could devote to Ottawa outside the war effort.

The political structure that Borden’s office established for the FPC may also have hindered implementation of the plan. The commission disbanded and its staff dispersed after the report was printed. The mayors changed frequently in those days, so there were no powerful local advocates of the plan when it was released. The FPC’s Tory commissioners moved on to other concerns during the war, and they would have had no political access to the prime minister’s office after the Liberal Party won the 1921 election. Although the FPC plan was put on the shelf, Borden’s defeat was actually the beginning of the most active period for federal involvement in Ottawa planning issues. The new

Figure 5: Edward Bennett's Plan for an Ottawa Municipal Plaza

Gordon / PLANNING CANADA’S CAPITAL 17
prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, was personally committed to making a national capital that Canadians would be proud to call their own.

A KING AS A TOWN PLANNER

William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874-1950) was Canada’s longest-serving prime minister, holding that office for most of the period from 1921 to 1948. He was the grandson of William Lyon Mackenzie, leader of the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada. Like his mentor Laurier, King was dismayed by Ottawa when he arrived as a civil servant in the Department of Labour in 1900:

The first glimpse of the city was from the lately fire swept district and it was gloomy enough. The business part of the town is small and like that of a provincial town, not interesting, but tiresome... Ottawa is not a pretty place, save about the parli. bldgs [parliament buildings] and has all the non-attractions of a small town.

King became a protégé of Governor-General Grey as a young man, sharing mutual interest in social policy and reform politics. They were an odd pair, since both lived in the shadow of their radical grandfathers. Unlike previous prime ministers, King had a strong personal interest in town planning as a result of his late-nineteenth-century education. While a graduate student at the University of Chicago, he was an intern at Jane Addams’s pioneering university settlement house, where he was exposed to early social planning advocates. After completing his doctoral course work at Harvard, King spent 1899 in England, when Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City was promoted in social reform circles. There was some overlap between British town-planning advocates and settlement house leaders at that time, with Henrietta Barnett and Earl Grey’s involvement in the settlement houses, Hampstead Garden Suburb, and Letchworth.

Although King’s main professional interest was labor relations, he regarded town planning as a component of an overall program for social reform. In his 1918 treatise, Industry and Humanity, King devoted several sections to planning.

Town-planning and rural planning and development were almost unthought-of a generation ago. To-day they are subjects of scientific study, and compel the recognition of Government. It is to be hoped that ere long public opinion will no more tolerate the slum and the overcrowded tenement than it would tolerate plagues such as were prevalent a generation ago.

The garden city movement was founded in England in 1899, and has spread to different countries throughout the world. It recognizes the slum as the product of bad means of transit and high land values, combined with the necessity of men living near their work.
King’s interest in planning was complemented by a growing personal commitment to Ottawa’s development as a capital worthy of the growing nation. He followed in Laurier’s footsteps, personally managing almost every planning and design proposal of the federal government over the next thirty years. It was also an element in King’s peculiar personal life, as he devoted his limited financial resources to enlarging his country estate in the Gatineau Hills, siting relics from demolished Ottawa buildings within its landscape.

Mackenzie King took direct control of the OIC during his first term of office (1921-1930), requesting that several of the less active members resign. The prime minister personally recruited Ottawa utilities tycoon Thomas Ahern as the new OIC chair. Fed up the OIC’s delays in building the long-planned Champlain Bridge, Ahern paid for the acquisition of the approaches and part of its construction out of his own pocket. King had found a town-planning activist with ambitions that matched his own.

Despite Ahern’s personal efforts, the prime minister’s patience with the OIC finally ran out. He dissolved the agency and introduced new legislation to establish the Federal District Commission (FDC) with a wider mandate and an annual budget of $250,000. Ahern was appointed the FDC’s first chairman.

The prime minister had ambitious plans during the boom years of the late 1920s. The Peace Tower was completed in 1927 as the new focal point of the parliament buildings. King’s office investigated widening a narrow downtown street into a broad avenue to provide a direct vista to the tower. King’s advisors recommended against the move since the cost of acquiring the properties was too large and a number of historic buildings would have to be demolished. Perhaps King was interpreting his mentor’s “Washington of the North” pledge too literally. Ottawa has more similarities with gothic Edinburgh than baroque Washington or Paris. The proposal was quietly shelved, to reappear periodically in the future.

Mackenzie King and Ahern also planned an ambitious urban renewal scheme to create a major public plaza between Elgin Street, the Rideau Canal, and Wellington Street. This scheme was loosely based on Edward Bennett’s 1915 proposal for a civic plaza in Ottawa (see Figure 5). The site was occupied by three substantial buildings: Ottawa City Hall, the main post office, and the city’s leading hotel, the Russell House.

The prime minister’s hand was forced on April 18, 1928, when the Russell House was destroyed by fire. The owners immediately applied for permits to rebuild on the site, so the federal government had to act quickly if it wished to acquire the vacant property. King requested that Parliament amend the FDC’s act to reduce its annual appropriation to $200,000 and provide a fund of $3 million to redevelop the core of the capital. The Commons resisted spending such an enormous sum on dreary Ottawa, and the prime minister had to force three divisions in the House. Mackenzie King personally drove the bill through, declaring,
We may not come to have the largest, the wealthiest or the most cosmopolitan Capital in the world, but I believe that with Ottawa’s natural and picturesque setting, given stately proportions, and a little careful planning, we can have the most beautiful Capital in the world. So I would ask my fellow members of this House of Commons to view not only with sympathy but with enthusiasm a project which everyone will recognize as beyond the consideration of party, that has for its object solely and wholly the development and beautification of Ottawa as the Capital of this great Dominion, something that will give some expression of all that is highest in the idealism of the nation and something which those from beyond our gates and those who may follow in future years will come to recognize as an expression in some degree of the soul of Canada today.\textsuperscript{106}

King used the federal investment to push the Ottawa City Council into an agreement that it would relocate its City Hall and widen Elgin Street. The prime minister alternatively bullied the council with threats of federal investment and embarrassed them with patriotic rhetoric. The mayor and council reluctantly agreed to relocate in the future, perhaps lured by Edward Bennett’s 1915 image of a magnificent new City Hall dominating the new plaza. The City Council’s agreement was the start of twenty years of poor treatment of the local government by a federal government determined to remake the historic core of the city in its own image.\textsuperscript{107}

To give some political impetus to the Elgin Street plaza, Mackenzie King named the project Confederation Square and proposed it as the site for the national memorial to those who gave their lives in the Great War. A memorial had been commissioned from an English sculptor, but its site had not been selected from several locations on Parliament Hill and its surroundings.\textsuperscript{108}

King lost the 1930 election to R. B. Bennett before he could start construction of the plaza and war memorial, but he never gave up. Only two days after Bennett took office, King wrote to the new prime minister to ensure that the city of Ottawa did not wriggle out of its agreement to relocate City Hall as part of the project. The opportunity to complete the project came a few months later, when Ottawa City Hall burned in another spectacular fire. The mayor and council tried to sell the site to the federal government for the inflated value of $2 million. Bennett stalled them and eventually refused their offer.\textsuperscript{109} The City Council was offered “temporary quarters” in a nearby federal building and was kept there for the next twenty years while the federal government decided on the site of the new City Hall. After several schemes where the municipal government was incorporated in a major building facing the square, the city was shunted out of the downtown altogether. New City Hall was built in splendid isolation from the historic core of the city, on Green Island, near the mouth of the Rideau River.

When King returned to power in 1935, he vigorously pursued plans for the new square, perhaps embarrassed by the delays for the National War Memorial. The memorial was on temporary display in a London park, awaiting a suitable site in Ottawa. The prime minister was still determined to use the memorial as the centerpiece for the plaza at Elgin and Wellington streets.
Despite the prime minister’s enthusiasm for the project, the complicated tangle of bridges, streetcars, streets, and a canal resisted the efforts of a generation of planners to design an elegant solution. Noulan Cauchon’s 1928 scheme was perhaps the best, but his constant criticism of the OIC and FDC as chairman of the city of Ottawa’s Town Planning Commission (OTPC) must have annoyed the federal authorities. Most of Cauchon’s planning proposals were politely ignored by the national government, and the OTPC had neither the funds nor the mandate to implement them.

King’s problem was that the proposals of the FDC and the federal government’s architects were even less satisfactory. Toronto architect Henry Sproatt was retained to evaluate the schemes, and he recommended against the federal proposals.¹¹⁰

In truth, Canada simply did not have much talent in town planning and urban design in the late 1930s. The original generation of local activists like Cauchon and Meredith had died or retired, and no planners were being trained in the universities. The Town Planning Institute of Canada suspended operations from 1931 to 1952. Once again, the federal government reached outside Canada’s borders for technical assistance.

Mackenzie King found his planner by chance. During a 1936 visit to Paris, the prime minister indulged his interest in architecture and urban design by requesting a tour of the construction site of the upcoming World’s Fair. The director was not available for the last-minute request, so the chief architect, Jacques Gréber (1882-1962), was asked to conduct the tour. Gréber was then fifty-five and near the peak of his career as a classically trained architect, planner, and professor at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.¹¹¹ The two men established a good relationship immediately, and King invited Gréber to come to Ottawa as soon as possible to prepare plans for Ottawa’s core.

Gréber was not a total stranger to North America, having practiced in the United States from 1910 to 1918 and designed the Fairmount Parkway (1917) in Philadelphia.¹¹² His influential 1920 book _L’architecture aux Etats-Unis_ featured Bennett’s illustration of the Ottawa plaza as the introduction to the chapter on urban planning.¹¹³ Gréber added a visit to Ottawa to his 1937 trip to advise the New York World’s Fair committee. He quickly grasped the difficulty of its circulation problems and produced a series of designs that resolved them.¹¹⁴ Gréber combined Bennett’s formal building compositions with the basic elements of Cauchon’s circulation plan. A new bridge across the Rideau Canal was the stroke that cut the Gordian knot of infrastructure.

Gréber suggested that the traffic circulation pattern and congestion in the square was so severe that the war memorial should be placed in an adjacent park. King overruled him in a decision that he would later regret. The prime minister needed the memorial in place for unveiling during an upcoming royal visit. After a decade of delays, the post office was demolished, and the square was rebuilt to Gréber’s detailed plans over the next eighteen months. King
George VI and Queen Elizabeth unveiled the National War Memorial on May 21, 1939, with a satisfied prime minister at their side (see Figure 6).

The memorial was unveiled as the clouds of war were already gathering over Europe. The rest of Gréber’s plans for downtown Ottawa were put on hold while Canada plunged into a second world conflict. Although Mackenzie King’s attention was dominated by the war effort, the prime minister never forgot his plans for the national capital.

BUILDING A MODERN CAPITAL

The Canadian government laid plans for postwar reconstruction in 1944, including a significant role for community planning.115 Mackenzie King wasted little time in restarting the planning of the national capital. Gréber was
summoned from France in August 1945, only three days after Japan’s surrender. The prime minister intended that construction of a national capital for Canadians would be the principal memorial for those who fell during the Second World War.116

King established the National Capital Planning Committee (NCPC), independent of the FDC, with representatives from across the country. King chaired early meetings of the committee, and frequent references in his personal diary show that he followed its every move. Gréber was installed as head of the National Capital Planning Service, with an ample budget, numerous staff, and a wide mandate. The mistakes of the Holt era were rarely repeated since the NCPC consulted with local and provincial governments on both sides of the river. It built public support with newsreels, radio interviews, newspaper inserts, and exhibitions of a large model of the future capital held in cities across Canada.

King’s health was failing in 1948, but he hung on as prime minister until the draft plan was prepared, and he pushed an unusual commitment of $25 million to implement it through Cabinet as his final act. He noted his concern about the plan for the national capital in his diary:

I must now take care to get a bill carefully drafted and a speech carefully prepared. It will be my last measure as PM [prime minister] and I shall be surprised if with this background the Commons does not support the measure. Taken in conjunction with the Health program of this year and labour legislation based on my Industrial Disputes Act, it will make a fine conclusion to my record in Parliament on constructive measures that will run far into the future, affecting the well being of the people.117

Mackenzie King’s very last action before resigning as prime minister in 1948 was to appoint new members to the expanded FDC. He made it quite clear to his party that the national capital was his personal legacy, and his chosen successor, Louis St. Laurent, faithfully carried out his wishes.118

Gréber’s report was the most important Canadian plan of the mid-twentieth century (see Figure 7). Four years of background studies supported a comprehensive scheme for nine hundred square miles surrounding the capital. Gréber built on the reports of Todd, Bennett, and Cauchon, recommending elements of modernist urban planning:

- railway relocation from the downtown,
- a crosstown expressway,
- extension of the parkway network,
- creation of a greenbelt surrounding the urban area, and
- decentralization of government employment to suburban office parks.119

The greenbelt proposal was based on Howard’s Garden City proposal and the 1945 Greater London plan.120 It pleased King, who advocated garden city
principles in his 1918 book *Industry and Humanity*. A few months before his death, King contributed the foreword to the plan:

To be worthy of Canada’s greatness, its Capital must be planned with far-reaching foresight. . . . It answers the urgent needs for wise community planning and efficient traffic and transportation facilities; it corrects deficiencies resulting from unplanned undertakings in the past; it enhances the possibilities of that which is, as yet, unspoiled. . . . The plan cannot fail, given due appreciation and support, to result in the attainment of a Capital City of which Canadians of our own and future generations will be increasingly proud.

Despite its status as a war memorial and prime ministerial legacy, the 1950 plan had a slow start. The FDC proceeded with some railway relocations, but the remaining elements stalled due to weak provincial planning legislation and lack of consensus among the local governments. A 1956 joint Senate-Parliamentary committee concluded that the federal government would have to act alone. The FDC was transformed into the National Capital Commission (NCC) in 1959 and absorbed the NCPC and Gréber’s staff. It was given powers to expropriate land, build infrastructure, and create parks. The lands for the
greenbelt, parkway network, and Gatineau Park extension were expropriated quickly. Most of the elements of Gréber’s plan were implemented by 1970.124

Surprisingly, much of the work was carried out after the Conservative Party took power under Saskatchewan’s John Diefenbaker from 1957 to 1963. The project might have stalled in the mid-1950s, but the new Conservative government vigorously implemented the recommendations of the 1956 joint parliamentary committee. Diefenbaker’s personal touch was to appoint Saskatchewan native Eric Thrift as the general manager of the NCC.125 The FDC/NCC was virtually unstoppable as an implementation agency for twenty years after the war (see Figure 8). It spent $243 million (more than $1.5 billion in 1998) on the plan from 1947 to 1970.126 Ottawa and Hull were transformed from dreary industrial towns into a green, spacious capital that was visited by millions of Canadian tourists.

By 1970, the context for planning was almost entirely changed. The local governments on either side of the river developed their own technical staff and planning ideas. Ontario and Quebec established regional governments with sweeping planning powers. Neighborhood groups sprouted up across the region, and a new model of citizen participation in planning meant that NCC proposals often met severe criticism and defeat from community groups and
local governments. The idea of unilateral action by a governor-general or prime minister in the planning of the capital became unpopular and untenable. Recent prime ministers have carefully disguised their initiatives behind other agencies. Pierre Trudeau’s interest in the location of the new National Gallery and Museum of Civilization were screened by a special purpose construction agency, while the NCC’s recent proposal to create a Metcalfe Street axis to Parliament Hill (quickly squashed by local opposition) was rumored to have originated in the prime minister’s office.127

CONCLUSION

The motives for the involvement of elites in planning Canada’s capital changed over time. Some governors-general appeared to be influenced by a desire for simple comforts in a cold, muddy, and somewhat backward lumber town. Suggestions of driveways from the viceregal residence to Parliament Hill, and picturesque vistas and attractive grounds in Rockcliffe Park, seem motivated by these rather selfish concerns.

A second motivation may have been representation of imperial power. Lord Dalhousie’s purchase of the future Parliament Hill and Sir Edmund and Lady Head’s promotion of the site for the parliament buildings seems to be based in that tradition. Later proposals by Lady Aberdeen, Earl Grey, and Thomas Mawson seem rooted in a desire that Ottawa become a worthy capital of a dominion of the British Empire. Similar sentiments in India led to the creation of New Delhi during the same period.128

When the British Empire was at its zenith, in the early years of the twentieth century, it did not seem unusual for some aristocrats to simultaneously promote imperialism, town planning, and social reform in Canada. Lady Aberdeen and Lord and Lady Grey appeared to operate in this tradition of noblesse oblige. The initiative in planning Canada’s capital began to switch to its prime ministers at the turn of the century, with Laurier’s OIC and Borden’s FPC. However, their speeches and papers indicate that both these politicians combined a mild form of Canadian nationalism with respect for the British Empire. This combination, not unusual at the turn of the century, allowed for cooperation with the viceregal initiatives for planning the capital.

William Lyon Mackenzie King held different views. Although originally a protégé of Laurier and Grey, he always viewed Ottawa as the capital of an independent country. Ottawa’s symbolic role as the capital of a federation meant that its twentieth-century planning history had many similarities to Canberra’s role in Australia.129 King was instrumental in separating Canada from Britain’s direct influence during his career as leader of the Liberal Party from 1919 to 1948.130 Although King’s government later imported many British town planners, he personally selected France’s Jacques Gréber to plan the capital (see
Figure 9). The cosmopolitan Gréber was warmly received by both English and French Canadians.

Gréber designed a plan that cloaked its modernity in Beaux Arts watercolor renderings. It served as a guide for the rapid transformation of a declining industrial town into a modern capital. Mackenzie King gave the plan such a mighty shove that it was implemented in the two decades after his death, despite a weak regulatory environment and two changes in regime in the federal government. After King’s passing, the initiative passed from the prime minister’s office to powerful planning agencies.

It seems ironic that despite the efforts of various dukes, earls, a princess, and a queen, it was a commoner named King (the grandson of a revolutionary) who is most responsible for the shape of Canada’s capital today.

NOTES

Abbreviations for primary sources:

CPM Colborne P. Meredith papers, National Archives of Canada, MG 29 E62.
DHB Daniel H. Burnham papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Burnham Library of Architecture Collection 1943.1.
15. Richard W. Scott, *The Choice of Capital: Reminiscences Revived on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Selection of Ottawa as the Capital of Canada by Her Late Majesty* (Ottawa: Mortimer Company, 1907), 30. However, Knight, *Canada’s Conflict Resolution, 368*, would find neither the sketch nor any evidence of its enclosure in the brief. Military considerations also influenced the decision—Montreal, Toronto, and Kingston were quite open to American attack. One American newspaperman approved of Ottawa’s
position: “Invaders would inevitably be lost in the woods trying to find it.” Cited in Lucien Brault, Ottawa Old and New (Ottawa: Ottawa Historical Institute, 1946): 153.
17. Dalhousie was reported to have imagined the parliament buildings on their current site from the outset: “On that prominence (pointing to Barracks Hill) may one day be the Seat of Government.” Bytown Gazette, March 7, 1844. However, the government had leased much of the land west of Parliament Hill and eventually had to buy it back. See Taylor, Ottawa, 17-20.
18. Young, Glory of Ottawa.
19. For the reaction of senior civil servants and their families to the proposed move, see the diaries of Edmund and Fanny Meredith, reported in Sandra Gwyn, The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984).
23. Duke Argyll (Marquis of Lorne), Passages from the Past (London, 1907), 2:444. Lady Aberdeen also had a nasty encounter with the capital’s roads. She almost drowned when her ponies slipped and threw her carriage into the swollen Ottawa River. Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twa’: Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen (London, 1925), vol. 2: chap. 9.
29. Haig, Ottawa, 117. Earlscliffe became the residence of the British high commissioner in 1928; 24 Sussex Drive, although built in 1868, became the prime minister’s official residence only in 1951.
31. She immersed herself in social issues, founding the National Council of Women and the Victorian Order of Nurses. See ibid., chap. 20, “The Remarkable Ishbel.”
33. Ibid., 479, entry for November 19, 1898.
36. Among those on the platform were W. S. Fielding (premier of Nova Scotia), Henry Bate (Ottawa grocer), and Thomas O’Keefe, all of whom were later involved in the OIC. Ottawa Journal, June 19, 1893, 3.
37. Laurier’s widow gave the house to William Lyon Mackenzie King, who lived there until his death in 1950.
38. Aberdeen, Canadian Journal, 478-9, entry for November 19, 1898. W. S. Fielding was Laurier’s minister of finance and former premier of Nova Scotia. He and his wife were invited to Lady Aberdeen’s picnic with the prime minister; EHB papers.
39. Fielding speech to House of Commons, August 2, 1899, Hansard, 9186, and An Act Respecting the City of Ottawa, 62-63 Vict. chap. 10.7(c), assented August 11, 1899.
41. OIC, *Special Report of the Ottawa Improvement Commission, from its inception in 1899 to March 13, 1912* (Ottawa, 1913), and OIC Annual Reports, 1900-1914, NCC.

42. OIC Annual Reports, 1903-1914. King Edward Avenue connected to Rideau Street, the main commercial thoroughfare. Future governors-general preferred the more dignified and scenic route along the Ottawa River to Sussex Drive.

43. Laurier to Sir Thomas Shaughnessy (president of Canadian Pacific Railway), October 22, 1910. WL correspondence, reel 299, p. 176326.


48. OIC Annual Reports, 1912-1915.


50. Unwin’s address was reported in the local newspapers: “Ottawa has opportunities, for obtaining ideal city,” *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, May 22, 1911, 1; “Movement for Garden City,” *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, May 23, 1911. See also “Canada and Town Planning: Interview with Mr. Raymond Unwin,” *The Record, Hampstead Garden Suburb* 2, no. 2 (1914): 87-9. Thanks to Mervyn Miller for providing this article.


53. Grey personally invited the OIC members to Vivian’s lecture on October 22, 1910. CPM, vol. 5, file 36, Ottawa correspondence 1910. See also Mawson, *Life and Work*. For typical texts of Mawson and Vivian’s standard speech from their cross-country tour, see Two Notable Addresses on Town Planning and Housing (Calgary: Calgary Planning Commission, 1912). Meredith’s role in organizing their criticism of the OIC’s work is documented in CPM, 1911 correspondence files.

54. Letter from Lord Grey to Sir Henry Bate, September 15, 1911, RLB, reel 3960, p. 607A.

55. Ibid., 608B.


57. Grey letter to Borden, October 12, 1911, RLB, reel 3698, p. 607.

58. OIC Annual Reports, 1912-1914.

59. Laurier letter to C. P. Meredith, December 20, 1911, CPM, 1911 correspondence file.


62. Chas. Murphy (OIC secretary) letter to Hal McGieverin M.P., August 3, 1910, cc. WL correspondence, 1796634. It is not clear whether Meredith was also artistically talented. Only a few of his designs survived, including the former Murphy Gamble department store.

63. OIC minutes, September 15 and October 3, 1910. Copies in CPM, vol. 6, file 43. Meredith suggested leading American landscape architect and planner Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. He visited Olmsted at his Brookline, Massachusetts, office on October 10, 1910, to sound him out on the idea. Meredith to
Olmsted, October 7, 1910, and Olmsted memo, October 10, 1910, OA papers. I am indebted to Professor Larry McCann for bringing these papers to my attention


65. Cauchon’s articles are preserved and cross-referenced in his scrapbooks, NC, vols. 2, 3, 4, and 5.

66. Meredith chaired the conference of the Ontario Association of Architects in Ottawa 1911 and also headed the Ottawa chapter of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) that year. He arranged for the RAIC and the associations of Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and Alberta to send briefs to the government attacking the policies of the Department of Public Works and the OIC. The RAIC report is included in a blue paper issued by the federal government, Report and Correspondence of the Ottawa Improvement Commission, 2 George V sessional paper no. 51a (Ottawa: C. H. Parmelee, 1912). For Meredith’s behind-the-scene orchestration of events, see CPM, vol. 6, files 42-4.

67. Meredith’s role in organizing their criticism of the OIC’s work is documented in CPM, 1911 correspondence files.

68. For Mawson’s lobby, see Mawson to Borden, November 15, 1911, RLB correspondence; Mawson, Life and Work; and Meredith’s 1911-1913 correspondence in CPM. Mawson peppered his Canadian speeches with tributes to the British Empire and courted his viceregal contacts assiduously, even going so far as to dedicate the fourth edition of his book The Art and Craft of Garden Making (Batsford, 1912) to the Duke of Connaught. See Gordon Cherry, “Thomas Hayton Mawson (1861-1933): A Biographical Note,” Planning History Bulletin 9, no. 2 (1987): 28-9. Like most consultants today, Mawson used his books as promotional material for potential clients. He gave another copy to Frank Darling of the Federal Plan Commission (FPC), which survives in the Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto.

69. The RAIC memorial is included in Report and Correspondence of the Ottawa Improvement Commission.


71. Mawson to Borden, November 15, 1911, concluding, “Nothing could more thoroughly inspire a city planner than the opportunity of placing on a sound logical and aesthetic basis, the Capital of Greater Britain’s most prized possession.” Included in CPM, 1911 correspondence file. Borden, a supporter of the British Empire, apparently was not offended by this sort of patronizing imperialism.


73. RLB, file 35, June 1912 memorandum. Cauchon completed the survey in 1912. An original linen is available in the Queen’s University map collection. The survey was likely the first done since the days of Colonel By and served as the base map for Ottawa until after World War II. Newspaper articles about Cauchon sometimes refer to him as preparing a plan for Ottawa, which is technically correct but misleading since a topographic survey is a map in plan view rather than a comprehensive town-planning scheme. See Ottawa Journal, February 12, 1913, 1.

74. Laurier speech in House of Commons, January 12, 1912, Hansard, 977-81.

75. Meredith to Borden, January 13, 1912, CPM, 1912 correspondence file. Meredith also sent his memo to Laurier. Meredith to Laurier, June 13, 1912, CPM, 1912 correspondence file.

76. Report and Correspondence of the Ottawa Improvement Commission.


78. OIC, Special Report of the Ottawa Improvement Commission.

79. Meredith repeatedly tried to pull Todd into the fray, encouraging him to put his disappointment with the OIC on the public record. Meredith to F. Todd, January 18, 1912, CPM papers. Todd gave Meredith copies of his report but refused to condemn the government, presumably hoping for future commissions. Todd to Meredith, January 19, 1912, CPM papers. For Todd’s commission on Macdonald Gardens, see OIC, file 42, 1912. The name Macdonald Gardens did not stick. In the 1930s, it was known as Borden Park by local
town guides. Today, the park has no sign with its name, and it is not labeled in the most recent NCC map of the city, *NCC Map of the National Capital Region* (1996).


81. The deputy minister of finance approached Sir William Van Horne, the well-known former president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but he declined. For the circumstances of the formation of the FPC, see the 1913 correspondence of the deputy minister of finance in the OIC papers. Herbert Holt (1856-1941), president of the Royal Bank and Canadian Northern Railway, was then recruited as the chair. Other commission members included Montreal lawyer Sir Alexandre Lacoste, Toronto developer Robert Home Smith, and architect Frank Darling. For Holt’s background, see T. Regehr, “A Capitalist Plans the Capital” (unpublished paper to the Canadian Historical Society 1984 meeting). Professor Gilbert Stelter’s suggestion that I review this paper is appreciated. The background of the other members was obtained from H. C. Charlesworth, ed., *Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1919); *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Canadian History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1926); and *Who’s Who and Why* (Toronto: International Press, 1914).

82. Connaught was more concerned about the typhoid epidemic. See G. H. Perley to Connaught, July 30, 1912, RLB, reel 4047, pp. 70637-8.

83. Mawson telegram to Borden, November 20, 1913, RLB, reel 3981, p. 10389, and letter to Borden, November 24, 1913, RLB, reel 3981, p. 10390.


85. Meredith to Borden, December 27, 1913, CPM, 1913 correspondence file.


89. However, Borden probably gave Holt his reward, since he was knighted in 1915, after the FPC report was completed. Sir Herbert Holt became Canada’s richest man in the mid-century; see William Weintraub, *City Unique* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996). The only further Ottawa town-planning correspondence in Borden’s papers dealt with issues near his home after his retirement. See Borden to P. D. Ross, November 14, 1927, RLB, reel 4130, pp. 157389-91.


91. The plan was attacked by opponents of the City Beautiful approach. See Thomas Adams, “Ottawa-Federal Plan,” *Town Planning and the Conservation of Life* 1, no. 4 (1916): 88-9. The federal district proposal was a complete nonstarter in Quebec, and Hull refused to pay its share of the costs. The court case dragged on for years, souring local opinion of the plan. See FIN, files 142-1; Gordon, “City Beautiful Plan.”

92. Charlotte Grey, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Viking, 1997). Ironically, William Lyon Mackenzie, the prime minister’s rebel grandfather, was impressed by his first visit to Bytown, before the lumber industry despoiled the river. He wrote in the *Haldimand Independent* on October 11, 1851, “Bytown and its environs astonishes me. . . . nature seems to have destined it for the site of a great city and I suppose that it would have been chosen for the capital of the United Canadas had it not been located above tidewater.” Reprinted in Knight, *Canada’s Conflict Resolution*, 139.

93. WLMK diary, May 24, 1900.


95. King lived in the Passmore Edward Settlement house while he was in London and visited Henrietta Barnett, the Webbs, and other reformers. WLMK diary, October 11 and 18, 1899, and January 27, February 6, and February 24, 1900. Dame Barnett kept Earl Grey informed about the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust while he was in Canada. See Barnett to Grey, February 21, 1910, in CPM, vol. 4, file 29.

97. King literally followed in Laurier’s footsteps every day, since he lived in Laurier’s house in Sandy Hill after he became prime minister. His diary records many observations on the development of Ottawa from his daily walk home.

98. Edwina Von Baeyer, *Garden of Dreams: Kingsmere and Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990). The majority of the relics are from a demolished Ottawa bank and the burned center block of the parliament buildings. Several panels were presented to King by visiting British officials; other statues were bought by King during European visits. At least one fragment was extracted from the bombed Westminister Houses of Parliament by a future prime minister and shipped home by submarine at taxpayers’ expense. See L. B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson* (Toronto: Signet, 1973), 1:187-8.

99. King letter to Robb and Fraser, July 24, 1925; King to Casgrain, July 25, 1925. The prime minister also personally pursued the heads of the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railway to get their cooperation in creating Gatineau Park. King to Beatty (Canadian Pacific Railway), April 26, 1926, WLMK, reel 3448, pp. 108540-8.

100. Ahern to King, January 3, 1927, WLMK reel 3257, pp. 119579-80.


103. King speech, Hansard, April 24, 1928, 2435. The U.S. consulate was also interested in the Metcalfe Street proposal, to give a more imposing site for its new embassy on Wellington Street: U.S. Ambassador Phillips to King, February 14 and June 5, 1928; Harold Fisher to King, April 23, 1928; Baldwin (King’s secretary) to W. Phillips (U.S. Ambassador), June 6, 1928, WLMK, reel 3266, pp. 129478-9, 132632.

104. Ahern letter to King, June 14, 1927; Mayor Balharrie to King, September 15, 1927; King to Balharrie, October 27, 1927, WLMK, reel 3257, 119584-7.


107. Taylor, “City Form and Capital Culture,” and *Ottawa*, chaps. 4 and 5.


110. Sproatt to King, June 6, 1929, WLMK, reel 3277, pp. 143941-2.


114. Gréber collection, National Archives of Canada, 1937 plans for Confederation Square and NMC.


116. King speech to House of Commons, April 21, 1944, Hansard, 2237-8.

117. WLMK diary, May 25, 1948.

118. King kept the Cabinet standing at the end of the meeting while he signed the Federal District Commission (FDC) Order in Council. He stacked the FDC with his candidates but left several Senate appointments (perhaps the best political patronage jobs in Canada) to his successor. WLMK diary, November 12, 1948.


124. The Gréber plan’s Achilles’ heel was its population projection. It expected that the national capital region would double in population from 250,000 to 500,000 between 1950 and 2000. The postwar baby boom and rapid government expansion meant that the region passed 500,000 by 1976 and more than 1 million people by the 1996 census. While 500,000 people were accommodated within the greenbelt, as planned, the post-1970 development outside the greenbelt has been largely conventional suburban development with few redeeming features. See D. Gordon, “Weaving a Modern Plan for Canada’s Capital: Jacques Gréber and the 1950 Plan for the National Capital Region,” *Urban History Review* 29, no. 2 (spring 2001): 43-61.


131. Gréber also arranged for the French government to present Canada with an Aubusson tapestry of the plan, which further reinforced its connection to Canada’s other European ancestors. See Gréber, *Plan for the National Capital*, atlas plate 20.
DIRTY WORK AND CLEAN AIR
Locomotive Firemen, Environmental Activists, and Stories of Conflict

DAVID STRADLING
University of Cincinnati

On May 28, 1923, Fireman William Yates fueled a locomotive on a yard run between Cincinnati and its industrial neighbor, Norwood. On a cut in the hill separating the two cities, the locomotive stalled. Yates, who had been given no advance information concerning the train’s load that day, had not prepared an adequate fire. The engine idled on the steep grade, and the stack issued dense smoke for nearly two and a half minutes as the crew attempted to recover steam. Unbeknownst to Yates, a city smoke inspector was observing the stalled locomotive, noting the smoke, and writing out a warrant for the fireman’s arrest. Yates had violated the long-standing law against the issuance of dark smoke. Just four days later, a court fined Yates $25, plus $2 for the violation. His employer, the Pennsylvania Railroad, faced no charges and received no fines.¹

Yates’s arrest provoked a grievance from his union representatives, which in turn sparked a discussion about smoke control among Pennsylvania managers in Cincinnati and other cities, and a series of communications between the company and the city’s chief smoke inspector and antismoke reformers. The company’s superintendent, Robert Barnard, knew that the Pennsylvania had received far more attention than was its due, resulting in negative publicity and added friction between management and workers. Barnard’s investigation of the smoke problem revealed uncommon interest from Charles P. Taft, whose beautiful home lay just above the Pennsylvania’s line through town. Taft was the owner of the influential Cincinnati Times-Star and, with his wife, a founding and active member of the Smoke Abatement League, the well-connected public interest group that had forced the city to tighten its antismoke ordinance and step up enforcement. The city had long responded to the concerns of the league, which had been organized in 1906. Barnard concluded that the

AUTHOR’S NOTE: I would like to thank the Hagley Library for a generous research grant and Chris Baer for his help in using the Pennsylvania Railroad archives housed there. I would also like to thank Martin Summers, Andrew Hurley, Joel A. Tarr, and an anonymous reader for the Journal of Urban History for their helpful comments on this article.

JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY, Vol. 28 No. 1, November 2001 35-54
© 2001 Sage Publications
presence of the Taft home near the Pennsylvania’s Eggleston Avenue tracks had precipitated complaints, both through Times-Star coverage and through Taft’s personal relationship with Louis More, president of the Smoke Abatement League.2

Despite Bernard’s conclusions about Taft’s role in the arrest, Yates’s case was hardly unusual. For three decades, railroad employees had directly borne the burden of antismoke legislation in industrial cities around the nation, as they faced fines from municipal courts or punishment from employers when their locomotives were caught in violation of the law. Designed to control the appalling smoke pollution found in coal-dependent cities, antismoke ordinances limited the shade of emissions and the length of time smoke could be emitted legally.3 Using the municipal authority to control nuisances, cities regulated smoke to prevent coal consumers from damaging the health and property of their neighbors.4 By the early 1910s, essentially all sizable American cities had legislated against dark smoke, and most had hired inspectors to observe stacks and offer advice to troubled operators. Prosecuted violators generally faced small fines, which in the case of Cincinnati ranged from $25 to $100. Typically, the law treated locomotive stacks the same as stationary stacks, although, often, inspectors had difficulty observing moving engines for the length of time required for a violation. Of course, inspectors had no difficulty observing idling engines.

The impetus for the wave of antismoke regulation came largely from middle-class women who argued that smoke was filthy, ugly, unhealthy, immoral, and unnecessary. Each of the arguments was predicated on the assumption that urban residents needed to protect children and homes from the intrusion of industry, dirt, and immorality. Together, they represented an early environmentalist philosophy, often referred to as “municipal housekeeping.” Eventually, others joined the crusade, including physicians, engineers, and businessmen. By the early 1910s, this middle-class environmental movement had created tough emissions regulations in most industrial cities, but they were only sporadically and partially enforced. In the smokiest cities, municipal smoke inspectors balanced the need to improve air quality with the need to prevent widespread resistance to reform. Since almost everyone burned coal in industrial cities, at work and at home, even those who protested smoke most vigorously could find themselves facing prosecution.5 Coal dependence, then, encouraged a moderate approach to abatement. Most cities helped plant owners and managers reduce emissions through advice, instruction, and, only when necessary, coercion.6 Although technical improvements and diligence from firemen helped reduce smoke from stationary boilers, railroads remained troublesome polluters until diesel locomotives replaced coal-fed engines after World War II. In the meantime, coal smoke and soot continued to haunt industrial cities, diminishing sunlight, soiling clothes, threatening health, and damaging furniture, drapes, and any other surface on which they fell.
Yates’s arrest and the subsequent struggle over who should pay the fine are extensively documented in the records of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The archives contain the makings of a wonderful and significant story. Conflicts between the key players—a large corporation, unionized labor, reform-minded women, municipal officials, and the urban elite—are central to understanding the Progressive Era, and the lessons from these struggles can speak to the entire century. Embedded in this one event are stories concerning the conflicts between labor and management, middle-class women and working-class men, and municipal officials and powerful corporations. Indeed, the multiplicity of stories that may be written about Yates’s arrest begs a preliminary question: for whom should the story be written? Scholars working in fields as diverse as labor, business, gender, urban, and environmental history might find this story of interest but only if it were told in different ways and given different meanings. Of course, the various fields have different expectations concerning contextual information (business historians, for example, might demand some discussion of the management structure of the Pennsylvania Railroad) and the sources of information (such as labor historians’ expecting the use of union files). But sources and context do not shape a story nearly as much as its conclusion, its attribution of meaning. In a very real sense, the intended audience would determine the lesson of Yates’s story, whether it primarily concerns the conflict between labor and environmentalists, the ability of corporations to delimit regulation, or the role of women in shaping environmental reform and reshaping industrial cities.7

Since the 1990 publication of the *Journal of American History* roundtable on environmental history, which all but ignored the city, urban historians have sought to stake out territory within that vibrant field.8 In 1993, Martin Melosi argued that ecological theory could add greatly to urban historians’ theorizing about the development of cities. And, like William Cronon, whose *Nature’s Metropolis* made claims about the importance of cities in understanding broad ecological transformations, Melosi argued for attention to the city as a whole, as an entity that functions, grows, and alters its natural surroundings. A year later, Christine Meisner Rosen and Joel A. Tarr concurred with Melosi’s call for greater attention to urban environmental history, reemphasizing the importance of cities in altering the environment. Although Melosi, Rosen, and Tarr made valuable observations, they missed the opportunity to make a bolder claim. Cities do not function just as systems or as entities with broad impacts on their natural surroundings. Urban environments themselves are places of contention—not just places where conflicts are played out but environments that often become the objects of struggle, where people of different classes, genders, and races vie to control valuable space. In this case, middle-class environmental reformers strove to control urban air, a process that required both the aid of municipal structures (the smoke department inspectors and the courts) and, ultimately, the control of other people (the firemen themselves).
Indeed, creating a civilized city, as envisioned by the reformers, would require
the taming or hiding of dirty work and dirty workers.9

Yates’s arrest represents the confluence of several different conflicts. First,
his story supports the arguments concerning the price of environmental reform
falling unequally on the working class.10 Echoing Andrew Hurley’s telling of
the inequalities that fell across Gary’s industrial landscape, here was an exam-
ple of the price of an environmental amenity, demanded by one class but paid
for largely by another.11 Certainly, smoke control would benefit the working
class, particularly since workers tended to live in the most polluted neighbor-
hoods. Still, many workers were much more concerned about the effects of
abatement on their jobs, especially the prospect of layoffs due to plant closures
or, in the case of locomotive firemen, replacement by electric technology,
which reformers understood to be the only permanent solution to locomotive
smoke. Indeed, in many cities, the antismoke movement evolved into a quest
for railroad electrification, a development that would have cost most locomo-
tive firemen their jobs.12 In Yates’s case, controlling smoke made his job much
more difficult, and when he failed in the task he lost hard-earned wages.

Second, from Yates’s perspective, this story may simply be told as a struggle
for workplace control. Here was a skilled worker challenged in his workplace
not just by management’s authority but even by reformers and their municip-
ally imposed regulations. As in the stories told by Christopher Sellers about
the development of industrial hygiene and by Mark Aldrich about the safety-
first movement, Yates’s story relates the diminishment of worker control in
the effort to improve workplace environments.13 In all three instances, the
impetus for reform came from concerned citizens rather than from manage-
ment. Locomotive firemen lost workplace control, as the state, working to pro-
tect the interest of the urban elite, demanded a new set of results and policed the
roads.14

Still another conflict rests in the shape of Yates’s workplace, which was like
few others since it ran linearly through the city, creating attenuated industrial
zones stretching through a variety of neighborhood types, including middle-
class residential areas.15 Yates was at work, but he worked in motion through
the city, and unfortunately for him, his work space passed through what others
considered to be domestic space.16 Richard White’s assertion that humans
know nature through work can be adjusted to fit the city. People know their
environments through particular activities.17 Working-class men knew the city
primarily through work; firemen knew the city through their expansive work-
place. Middle-class women, and even middle-class men, knew the city through
different activities, and the city represented a place of residence much more
than a place of work. For them, municipal housekeeping meant more than the
attempt to beautify and clean; it meant the redefinition of urbanity, the creation
of civilized space within the city. Increasingly in the progressive decades, for
the middle class the city and home were not two separate entities; city was
home.18 Thus, the conflict between middle-class reformers, many of them
women, and railroad employees involved an attempt to redefine space, with the reformers hoping to domesticate urban space.\textsuperscript{19}

Much of the conflict between labor, management, and city officials existed because the Cincinnati antismoke ordinance left in question exactly who would be held responsible for a smoky stack. The ordinance asserted that “any person, firm, association or corporation, or any employee thereof, who shall create or cause the nuisance” could be held responsible. This catchall phrasing was common in this era, and it allowed smoke inspectors to issue warrants for anyone, from the man shoveling coal to the chief executive. For stationary plants, including office buildings, hotels, and industries, managers or proprietors, not the men they hired to fuel their fires, generally faced the prospect of fines. In contrast, smoke inspectors usually treated locomotive firemen and engineers as independent contractors working on the equipment of a corporation but personally responsible for its performance. Thus, although smoky locomotives reflected badly on railroads, and the companies often received negative press for highly polluting engines, it was the firemen and engineers themselves who generally appeared in court and paid the fines. During intense campaigns to control smoke, cities did bring railroad officials into court, but in cases where the companies themselves faced fines, management often simply passed them on to the employees whose engines had been caught in violation. Some employees faced suspensions or dismissal if their locomotives earned fines. In this regard, then, antismoke ordinances disciplined workers, either directly through the actions of city smoke inspectors or through the retributions of employers.\textsuperscript{20}

In the hierarchy of environmental actors, the firemen occupied the bottom rung. Although the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen provided some protection against the power of the corporations, the union offered little protection against the demands of environmental reformers. Indeed, even railroad management could not effectively control municipal environmental policy. This may have been particularly true of the Pennsylvania’s midwestern lines, since the company’s upper management and its major stockholders lived in the East. The Pennsylvania could not hope to influence municipal policy in Cincinnati with the same (limited) success it found in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where the company was much more important to the local economy. Still, the company’s power over its own employees allowed management to blame workers, who often served as scapegoats, since inferior coal and poorly designed equipment frequently deserved greater blame. At the top of the hierarchy were the city’s environmental activists. Policy makers and municipal officials clearly attempted to follow the will of wealthy reformers. Certainly, no Cincinnati family held as much political power as the Tafts, and many other members of the Smoke Abatement League controlled local corporations, including leading retail and manufacturing concerns. With so many prominent backers, the league had little trouble gaining the attention of the city and influencing public policy.\textsuperscript{21}
Given the sporadic nature of antismoke enforcement, engineers and firemen faced pressure during relatively brief campaigns waged by city governments in response to public pressure, but the rhetoric of antismoke activists and officials indicated a constant concern for the intelligence and skill of firemen.22 G. H. Funk, the general railroad inspector in Cincinnati, a joint employee of the several railroads operating in the city, argued that “good judgment and intelligence are necessary to make a good fireman” and that railroads have a responsibility to educate their men. Indeed, most railroads took great interest in this project, issuing instructional pamphlets and, when necessary, even sending supervisors to ride locomotives for firsthand instruction. In the first six months of 1915, the Pennsylvania claimed to have instructed 9,725 firemen and enginemen “in the operation of locomotives so as to avoid objectionable smoke.”23

Railroads responded to, and perhaps encouraged, the perception of firemen as ultimately responsible for smoke production, particularly by disciplining employees who were caught in violation of the law. As early as 1892, the Chicago and North Western Railroad suspended engineers and firemen found guilty of violating Chicago’s smoke ordinance, which was then being enforced in an effort to clean up the city before the world’s fair. Years later, to deflate public demand for the electrification of Washington’s new Union Station, the Pennsylvania Railroad issued a warning to all enginemen and firemen in its Maryland Division. It promised prompt discipline for employees who allowed their engines to smoke. By 1908, the pressure to abate smoke had become so general that Pennsy issued a circular titled “Instructions to Enginemen and Firemen for the Economical Use of Coal.” Written by General Superintendent of Motive Power Alfred Gibbs, the instructions emphasized the conservation of coal, a consequence of smoke reduction, but the company’s interest in preventing forced electrification of railroads explains the circular’s issuance. Warnings and instructions were not enough to prevent violations, however, and in the first half of 1915, the Pennsylvania disciplined 333 firemen and engine-

men for “inexcusable unsatisfactory performance.”24

In Cincinnati, the antismoke movement brought particular pressure on rail-
road employees. As his fellow firemen faced prosecutions, George Henry wrote to the reform-minded Times-Star, “The smoke inspectors seem to think that the firemen are altogether to blame, but if they would look into the matter a little deeper they would see that this is a big mistake.” Edward Jerome, superintendent of the Smoke Abatement League, responded that in nearly every case the firemen might have taken some action to prevent dense smoke and thus the violation. Although Jerome claimed to write in a spirit of “respect and goodwill,” undoubtedly his comments were not received in the same vein. Earlier in the year, the league had made manifest its opinion of the skill of local firemen when it published a pamphlet, “Economical Firing,” that outlined how to successfully stoke a fire.25 Such a publication was an insult to locomotive firemen, and it revealed the middle-class reformers’ lack of respect for workers’ knowl-
edge and skill. A fireman’s job was actually quite complex, involving not just the shoveling of coal but also the anticipation of steam requirements, the arrangement of coal in the firebox, the cleaning of fires, and the monitoring of the boiler’s crown sheet. The work required extensive knowledge of the equipment, the road, and the engineer who had authority over the locomotive. Certainly, firemen understood that the perfection of these skills required experience, not just understanding.26

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen promoted respectability among the workers, particularly by encouraging “right conduct” both at work and elsewhere. In both limiting access to the position and disseminating knowledge of the work, the brotherhood fostered craft pride. The brotherhood also emphasized the gendered nature of the job. Their fraternal union pointed to their identity as skilled men. In addition, manliness itself involved success in work, the display of skill. Railroading was difficult and dangerous work, and mastery of it offered proof of manliness. Thus, the rhetoric of the antismoke movement, which questioned firemen’s skills, offered a deep challenge to the worker’s self-conception. That these challenges often came from women made them all the more threatening.27

The manliness of locomotive firemen contributed to a sense of responsibility for smoke. Articles in the brotherhood’s Locomotive Firemen’s and Enginemen’s Magazine revealed the seriousness with which the union took the issue. Never did the magazine mock the antismoke movement, and the tone of the articles and letters suggested appreciation for the need to control smoke.28 The magazine frequently addressed the issue in its regular question-and-answer column. In 1912, one brother asked about the effectiveness of antismoke devices. In responding, regular contributor F. P. Roesch argued that the value of particular devices mattered less than the “brain and intelligence at the wooden end of the scoop.” Thus, Roesch would not shift the responsibility for controlling smoke to some device; responsibility rested with the man. While not denying that some devices could aid in reducing smoke, he concluded, “It is the fireman who does the business.” Roesch was hardly alone in accepting responsibility for smoke control. Brother A. G. Kinyon even urged “more direction, more instruction, more supervision.” These changes, Kinyon thought, would aid the men in their quest to master their craft and display their skill. In this regard, then, firemen could often sound like the antismoke activists, demanding the display of skill and intelligence and using smoke as a sign of their absence.29

Roesch’s opinion of devices and Kinyon’s emphasis on supervision also reflected their appreciation of the state of antismoke technology. The physical constraints of locomotives and their highly variable and often unpredictable load requirements impeded the development of technical solutions to the railroad smoke problem. By the late 1910s, companies relied largely on three types of inventions: steam jets, brick arches, and automatic stokers. Steam jets allowed engineers to introduce hot air to the firebox at strategic moments to
reduce smoke. Brick arches concentrated and intensified heat in the firebox, helping to prevent the cooling of fires and thus incomplete combustion. Automatic stokers also reduced temporary cooling by gradually and regularly feeding coal onto the grate. Both steam jets and automatic stokers required considerable skill to operate. In addition, steam jets were so loud that some engineers were reluctant to use them, and automatic stokers were expensive to install and only gradually made their way into locomotives. For their part, brick arches were expensive to maintain, and like automatic stokers, they usually only appeared on locomotives operating in cities vigorously enforcing smoke laws. Each of these technologies brought significant costs for installation and maintenance, and none could guarantee smokeless operation. Thus, railroads relied heavily on the skill of their engineers and firemen to keep smoke to a minimum, regardless of how much antismoke technology they employed.30

Although the brotherhood’s emphasis on craft pride prevented firemen from taking the smoke problem lightly, a serious conflict did develop between reformers, management, and workers regarding what constituted successful abatement. Experience told firemen that dark smoke could not always be avoided and that man failure could be determined only after a series of other factors were considered, including load, grade, coal quality, condition of the equipment, and weather. For reformers—and the city smoke inspectors hired at their behest—dense smoke at the stack for a certain number of seconds was the only evidence necessary to conclude that failure had occurred. The sole question remaining was whether the failure lay with management or the men. This conflict put management in an awkward situation, since it generally knew the difficulty of preventing smoke in all situations while also understanding the need to avoid bad press and bad relations with city inspectors. Thus, management continually faced the choice of siding with the men and facing public scorn as obstructionists and bad corporate citizens or siding with the city and risking labor problems. In addition, prosecuted men faced the choice of charging their employers with failure to provide adequate equipment or charging the city with enforcing an unjustly strict ordinance. All of this led to continually shifting alliances: workers and reformers both blaming management for failure to take appropriate steps, particularly in upgrading equipment; workers and management agreeing that reformers’ demands were unreasonable, since some smoke was inevitable; and management and reformers claiming that smoke was evidence of workman failure.

Conflicts between the various parties could be serious, but a remarkable overlap in interests existed; all parties hoped to reduce smoke to a minimum at the least cost. The conflicts developed around what constituted “minimum smoke” and who should pay the costs of failure. A great deal of gamesmanship surrounded management’s efforts to avoid bad press and limit expensive investment in new technology—the two most significant costs of smoke borne by the company.31 In addition, most city smoke inspectors attempted to balance
the need for the appearance of effectiveness with the need to prevent widespread industry anger. Indeed, in many cities, rigorous enforcement was more likely than lax enforcement to lead to removal, and maintaining balance was crucial for smoke inspectors intent on remaining in office. For firemen, the consequences of these games could be quite severe. Just the lost wages resulting from court appearances could be a burden. In 1919, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen General Chairman D. D. Miller informed the Pennsylvania that the men could no longer bear the cost of smoke prosecutions. According to Miller, to avoid future problems the firemen decided to prevent black smoke “even to the extent of sacrificing steam pressure.” Miller also warned, “Any attempt to discipline individuals for steam failures under such circumstances will be met by the full strength of the organization.” In this instance, then, the Pennsylvania’s policy of allowing the men to take the brunt of antismoke prosecutions led to a threat against the efficiency of the company’s operations.

In cities where the antismoke movement evolved into an electrification crusade, firemen had even more incentive to both limit smoke production and delimit the antismoke rhetoric. Electrification of railroads would cost thousands of men their jobs because electric locomotives required no one to shovel coal. In Chicago, the brotherhood’s First Vice Grand Master Andrew Kelley testified in 1909 before a city council committee considering an electrification law. “I believe that this is a woman’s law,” began Kelley. Referring directly to Chicago’s female-led Anti-Smoke League, Kelley made clear his disdain for the middle-class, feminine movement to clear Chicago’s skies. Kelley even contradicted statements made about the health effects of smoke, pointing out that he had followed smoke for fifteen years and yet he remained a model of “health and strength.”

Kelley’s attack on antismoke activism’s feminine nature was apropos, since in most cities middle-class women had provoked government action. Acting through women’s clubs and single-issue interest groups, they observed stacks, circulated petitions, wrote government officials, and hired physicians and engineers to speak on the issue. This activism, often called municipal housekeeping, might more accurately be described as an effort to make the city more civilized. As an example of what Paul Boyer referred to as “positive environmentalism,” this activism was much more than an attempt to clean the city. It was part of a crusade to redefine the city, to announce the arrival of the American civilization even while civilizing its urban citizens. To railroad workers, these goals seemed much less important than the livelihood of workingmen. As locomotive engineer P. J. Culkin argued before Chicago’s city council, “Our conditions ought to be considered here as well as the smoke question.”

The case of Cincinnati provides a good example of how the issue brought middle-class, feminine conceptions of the city in direct conflict with working-class, male ideas. As in other young industrial cities, pollutant loads in Cincinnati were not perfectly correlated with wealth. Although elites had long
participated in what Zane Miller called a “flight to the hills”—the wealthy, elevated enclaves of Clifton, Mt. Lookout, and Walnut Hills—even in the 1920s this separation was incomplete. The Taft home, for example, was part of an elite East End preserve tucked between downtown and the industrial corridor that contained the Pennsy tracks. In addition, while many wealthy residents found reprieve from the worst of the pollution in the hills, those with smoke-shrouded views of the urban basin found reason for complaint, and when the weather was right, they found the soot invading their retreats. As early as 1911, the city complained about the conditions at Pennsy’s Pendleton shops, an important switching point that lay along the Ohio River at the foot of a bluff. Chief Smoke Inspector Matthew Nelson warned Pennsylvania Superintendent Robert Barnard, “Residents on the hill-tops are about to take united action” to force abatement at the shops. Nelson also warned that he would begin daily arrests unless Barnard took steps to alleviate the problem, including, Nelson suggested, possibly moving the shops outside the city limits. Barnard replied, “It might be well to remember that our plant existed at that point long before the people making the complaint at the present time built on the hill above.” Nelson would have none of Barnard’s assertion that prior occupation gave the company the right to pollute, suggesting that “the Indians were there before you were, so you see times change, and the ordinance against smoke is still in force.”

Sensing that he would receive no satisfaction from Barnard, Nelson wrote directly to James McCrea, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Nelson made clear that his concern echoed that of “some of our most prominent citizens residing on Grandin Road just overlooking [the shops].” He urged McCrea to order the relocation of the roundhouse, concluding, “It is not right or just that the treasures in these houses should be ruined by smoke, and I am sorry that you do not reside on that Road yourself, because if you did I feel sure that the smoke problem . . . would be speedily solved.” Nelson’s plea, answered by a second vice president, brought no removal of the shops but did initiate changes in the operation of the facility. Still, the Pennsylvania remained a target of antismoke activism through the remainder of the decade. Generally, periodic campaigns against the railroad involved communication with management and arrests of employees. In the newspapers, particularly the Times-Star, both employees and management faced criticism.

At the outset of the 1923 antismoke campaign, firemen paid a heavy price, but in late June, with arrests and fines mounting, Chief Smoke Inspector Gordon Rowe issued a warning: in future cases he would arrest company officials rather than firemen. Noting that violations were everyday occurrences, the company’s lawyers estimated that Superintendent Barnard might spend two or three mornings a week in court, severely affecting his ability to supervise the railroad. The lawyers concluded that Pennsy had to install proper devices on all engines immediately or begin the practice of pleading guilty at every instance, just to keep the superintendent out of court. A month later,
Barnard’s superior, General Manager of the Southwestern Region I. W. Geer, agreed to make changes per the smoke department’s specifications. Although the changes were not made until the following year, apparently arrests of Barnard were avoided.  

Pennsy’s agreement to install new antismoke devices temporarily relieved pressure on the company, but Fireman Yates still faced a $27 fine. By October, he had appealed his case through his union’s grievance system, hoping to force the company to reimburse him for the fine. The unions argued that the engine had been overloaded, causing it to stall on the hill. Perhaps more important, they claimed that since the Pennsylvania had failed to equip his locomotive with a smoke abatement device, Yates should not have been held responsible for the violation. The company responded that proper firing could always prevent a violation, with or without a smoke-abating device, concluding that “the excessive smoke was due to a man failure.”

As the grievance process began, General Superintendent R. K. Rochester begged advice from Geer, who responded with a series of questions. These questions indicated how little management knew about locomotive smoke prevention but also revealed a sincere interest in getting to some solution. Geer inquired if the engine had been overloaded and about the condition of the rails. More important, he asked if a device would have helped reduce smoke and whether Yates had any evidence of a particular device’s effectiveness. He also asked Rochester, “What have you to support your statement that Fireman Yates did not properly fire the engine?” Geer was not willing to simply accept the issuance of dark smoke as evidence of “a man failure.” Rochester responded to each of Geer’s queries. Given the nature of the run, he could not be certain of the load, but it was probably 620 tons, a weight that the engine should have been able to handle. The weather was fair and the rails dry. The engine was in good operating condition. Rochester also claimed to have overseen tests that indicated that an engine in good condition could be fired without smoke, whether it had a device or not. Thus, according to Rochester, the evidence that Yates was at fault lay in the smoke itself. Rochester did admit, however, that since this was a yard run, the crew would not have had advance notice about the number of cars to be moved on any given stretch. Still, Rochester left the obvious conclusion implied: the nature of the run made Yates’s job very difficult, since he did not know how much steam would be required, thus explaining the stalling on the hill.

As Yates’s case dragged on, Geer and union officials discussed its larger implications. The union argued that the prosecution of Yates and the other firemen represented a failure on the part of city officials to recognize the difficulty of the work. Quite simply, given the state of locomotive technology, the demands placed on engines, and the letter of the law, it was unrealistic to assume that firemen could observe the ordinance under all conditions. Just as important, the unions argued that the company could relieve pressure on its men by working more closely with city officials. Thus, according to the
unions, it was the company’s obligation to keep its employees safe from prosecution. After two months of investigation, it became clear that little evidence could be found to support either Yates’s or the company’s positions. This lack of evidence indicated the vagaries of smoke control, since at times men could operate locomotives smokelessly and at others they could not. The variables involved were myriad and continually confused the issue. On the last day of the year, Geer approved the payment of Yates in order to “clear the books.” He added in a letter to the union representatives, “It should be understood that we will continue to expect Engineers and Firemen to use every care and so handle the work on the engine that there will be no smoke violations due to their carelessness or neglect.” In other words, although Yates had won his appeal, Geer warned the men not to take it as precedent.

Unfortunately for the Pennsylvania, the next spring brought a new wave of antismoke activism. Louis More, president of the Smoke Abatement League, took special interest in the company. In April, More wrote to Pennsy Vice President Benjamin McKeen to complain that all railroads were cooperating with smoke inspectors, save the Pennsylvania. More even suggested that Pennsy officials seemed “inclined to support the men in their statements that they have not been smoking when it is perfectly evident that they have.” When notified of the letter, Superintendent Barnard defended his management of the Cincinnati lines. With regard to the men, Barnard noted that they had “unfortunately, always fought citations for violation of the ordinance.” Barnard explained that Chief Inspector Rowe had been in the practice of calling violating firemen to his office, where he would give a lecture on the need to limit smoke. If Rowe found the men sufficiently contrite and willing to promise improvements, he had them sign a pledge and allowed them to leave without prosecution. This was obviously a situation that benefited both Rowe (who fed his ego) and the companies (which avoided fines and bad press) but at the expense of the workers, who lost pay and face. In the spring of 1923, about the time of Yates’s arrest, Pennsy employees had notified Barnard that they would no longer willingly see Rowe unless the company paid them for their time. When Barnard refused these payments, he warned the men that antagonizing the smoke inspector was not a good idea.

Barnard suggested that the refusal of the men to bend to Rowe’s demands had initiated the flurry of arrests since early 1923, including Yates’s. Barnard also suspected that the men’s practice of using a lawyer hired by the unions further antagonized Rowe. As the antismoke campaign picked up again in early 1924, Barnard assumed the special attention shown Pennsy may have been related to Rowe’s suspicion that the company had hired the lawyer and instructed its employees to fight every arrest. Although Pennsylvania locomotives were certainly guilty of smoke offenses, according to Barnard, Rowe’s negative attitude about the company was unjustified. Indeed, data collected by
smoke inspectors jointly employed by all the city’s lines indicated that the Pennsylvania was undeserving of special attention.46

At Geer’s request, Barnard met with More and the managing editor of the *Times-Star*, the newspaper that continued to give Pennsy bad press. Barnard felt the meeting was a failure, noting that More spent much of the time lecturing him on the need to obey the ordinance without giving an indication of how this was possible. According to More, the meeting was “in some respects satisfactory” but unnecessary. He asserted that the trouble with Pennsy was simply that management did not have “sufficient control over the men to ask them to obey the law.” More suspected the problem at Pennsy would persist until the company decided to “punish vigorously” and “exact obedience.” More also complained that Barnard had brought the road foreman of engines, who supervised firemen and engineers in the roundhouses, and the master mechanic, who had knowledge of the engines and the antismoke devices in use in Cincinnati. Barnard defended his decision to bring the men to the meeting, noting that anyone truly desirous of ending smoke would surely want their input. Furthermore, he claimed that More’s statements concerning worker control probably referred to the firemen’s use of an attorney, over which, Barnard noted, the company actually did have no control.47

Despite his assertion that the meeting was a failure, Barnard came away with a new understanding of the problem. The men were not the issue, nor was the amount of the smoke. The problem lay with the location of the Pennsy lines. The track connecting the Pendleton shops with the Court Street station and Norwood, the line on which Yates had stalled, passed along Eggleston Avenue. The road lay just below the home of Charles P. Taft. Barnard concluded, “Naturally complaints from the Tafts to Mr. More or Mr. Straus [managing editor of the *Times-Star*] carry a great deal of weight.” In addition, the Pendleton shops, which continued to receive considerable attention, lay at the base of a bluff below the city’s finest neighborhoods. Most likely, Pennsy’s problems had less to do with worker control than with the misfortune of having to do dirty work in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods.48

In this sense, Yates’s story helps complicate the idea of municipal housekeeping. As Maureen Flanagan has deftly pointed out, historians have often delimited the influence of middle-class, female environmental reformers simply through the use of this term.49 Flanagan was right to assert that historians have misjudged the influence of municipal housekeeping and the women who espoused it. But while Flanagan emphasized the gendered visions of the city—the male vision of a city profitable and the female city livable—she too missed a fundamental conflict, one centered as much on class as on gender. The vision of the “city as shared home” developed through middle-class women but was comfortably extolled by middle-class men as well.50 But for the working class, particularly men, urban space remained largely about work. Their homes did not so easily expand into the city, since they tended to be proximate to work
and since their work tended to be dirty, dangerous, and often degrading—the opposite of home. Indeed, for many working-class families, work was much more likely to intrude on the home, not just through dirty bodies and soiled work clothes but through the piecework family members brought into the home to supplement income. In addition, immigrants and African Americans regularly faced reminders that they were unwelcome and not at home in the city.  

Thus, while the separation of work and home was largely a middle-class achievement, it had implications for the working class, as activists demanded citywide reforms to re-create the city. Although much has been made of attempts by the upper classes to “shut out the disorder of the streets,” the first two decades of the twentieth century contain much more evidence of sustained efforts to remove that disorder altogether. Through the multifaceted City Beautiful movement, urban planning, zoning, and the smoke abatement movement, the urban elite struggled to find means to assert control over urban space. Each of these endeavors was much more than an attempt to develop efficient cities with profitable arrangements of space. As progressive reformers well understood, the control of space meant the control of people, and this was the crucial first step in creating a civilized, residential city. To be successful, the process would require the taming or the hiding of dirty work and dirty workers.  

Shortly after the meeting between More, Straus, and Barnard, Chief Smoke Inspector Rowe met with Chester Thorpe, vice president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen. Thorpe suggested the creation of a committee of firemen, operating under railroad smoke inspector Funk, that would review cases and recommend action. Essentially, this was the plan that had been in operation in Chicago for several years. Thorpe hoped to find some alternative to the arrests of firemen and the $25 fines. Since January 1, 1923, twenty-eight firemen had been convicted. Although Rowe maintained the legitimacy of the city’s actions, he agreed to support changing the ordinance to contain a new minimum fine, $10, so that workingmen might more easily pay. Perhaps more important, Thorpe hoped to convince Rowe that the special nature of locomotive operation necessitated a special arrangement for smoke inspection. Perhaps partly because Thorpe’s visit coincided with rumors that the approximately one thousand firemen in town were preparing for a strike, Cincinnati did adopt a variant of the Chicago plan. Henceforth, all locomotive cases were reviewed by the railroads’ own smoke departments, headed by Funk. In most cases, the companies handled their own discipline of careless workers, issuing suspensions and reprimands, and in extreme cases even dismissing unsuccessful workers. The railroads continued to take abatement very seriously, and the men continued to pay heavy prices for their transgressions, but under the new arrangement the city arrested no railroad firemen or engineers, and thus court-ordered fines ceased. While tensions between the city and the railroads eased over the latter years of the 1920s, smoke diminished...
only gradually over the city. Not until diesel electric locomotives replaced steam in the 1940s did the conflicts between labor, management, and environmental reformers dissipate.53

The rules of evidence allow more than one conclusion for this story, but the rules of storytelling allow just one. The ultimate meaning of Yates’s arrest might concern three very different subjects: the workers’ loss of control through state action, the conflicting gendered visions of urban space, or the Pennsylvania Railroad’s consistent effort to limit the cost of environmental reform. These endings, with their concomitant attributions of significance, make sense for labor, gender, and business history, respectively, but what of environmental history or even urban history?

A focus on air quality seems natural for environmental historians, but to end the story with gradually diminishing pollution also diminishes the possibility of reaching across interdisciplinary boundaries. Clearly, the fate of the air is important to telling any story about Yates’s arrest, but it is not central to either the workers’ or management’s concerns. Instead, if environmental history is to produce inclusive narration, its stories must balance the fate of people with that of the environment. Cities provide the logical setting for such stories, for here conflicts over the control of space are myriad and central to the development of both cultural and natural places.

In Cincinnati, the Tafts asserted their right to control the air around their home; Yates asserted his right to control his workplace; the Pennsylvania’s management worked to control the costs of environmental regulation. Clearly, municipal officials aligned themselves with the middle- and upper-class reformers, and together they eventually reached accommodations with the Pennsylvania’s management. The firemen were limited in their abilities to act, both by their gender—the manliness that required them to take at least some responsibility for smoke—and by their class, which limited their ability to influence public policy. Over time, class-bound environmental activism shifted the burdens of environmental disamenities more exclusively to the working class, both at work and at home. Through union pressure, Yates eventually won a stalemate, from both the city and management, but in the end, the Tafts’ vision of the proper use of the city would win out.

NOTES


4. Some cities required state legislation granting the specific authority to regulate smoke, while others regulated smoke using the same authority that allowed them to abate any nuisance, such as foul smells or standing water. See Stradling, Smokestacks and Progressives, 61-84.

5. Andrew Carnegie and Marshall Field were among the most famous urbanites who both complained about smoke and faced prosecution for producing it. See ibid., 32, 204 (n. 32).

6. By the 1920s, antismoke ordinances gave smoke inspectors the authority to enter premises where stacks emitted illegal smoke. Once at the offending furnace, inspectors could offer instruction to operators, actually training the men on their own equipment. Locomotive firemen also received instruction from their superiors, both through special training and literature distributed by companies, cities, and activists. Ibid., 71.

7. On the need for and limitations of narratives, see William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narratives,” Journal of American History 78 (March 1992): 1347-76. Certainly, issues of audience are nothing new to historians. See Cronon’s discussion of the “problem of audience” in “The Uses of Environmental History,” Environmental History Review 17 (fall 1993): 3-8. Stories have long been told so as to suit a broad or specialized readership, and those of us who work within a specialized field understand the need to write to the themes outlined by earlier scholars. This practice may have the consequence of excluding most potential readers from the discussion, but it also serves the very important function of directing the paths of inquiry into new territory. Part of the attraction of environmental history, my field, is its potential to cut across the many boundaries that divide our profession. After all, every historical event has a physical setting, and every person has a relationship with the natural world. And, given the youth of the field, expectations concerning the contents of environmental history narratives are not nearly so comprehensive as they are in older fields. Unfortunately, the potential for speaking across boundaries has gone largely unfulfilled, and thus far environmental history has not overcome interdisciplinary divisions as much as created a new one. Still, as the pioneering work of Andrew Hurley on Gary, Indiana’s environmental inequalities should make clear, the study of the city offers the opportunity to investigate issues of race, class, gender, and environment in a unified manner, with stories of multifaceted conflicts forming the narrative thread. See Andrew Hurley, Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).


Scott Dewey has argued that elements of post–World War II organized labor worked as “proto-environmentalists,” often lobbying for pollution control before mainstream conservation groups were involved. Dewey’s focus on postwar America allows him to call these unions “early” in antipollution activism, but clearly they were not. In addition, in the late 1940s and 1950s, both unions and the economy were very strong. In the early twentieth century, labor was much less secure, and activism focused on economic justice rather than environmental amenities. See Scott Dewey, “Working for the Environment: Organized Labor and the Origins of Environmentalism in the United States, 1948-1970,” Environmental History 3 (January 1998): 45-63. For working-class activism in the Progressive Era, see Nell Irvin Painter, Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919 (New York: Norton, 1987).
12. This was particularly true of Chicago, where the antismoke movement demanded the electrification of the Illinois Central. See Chicago Association of Commerce, *Smoke Abatement and Electrification of Railway Terminals in Chicago* (1915).


14. Firemen and other crew members would have been particularly sensitive to supervision along the tracks since companies hired “spotters” to monitor workers’ performance. Management developed the detailed “Book of Rules” to control workers, most of whom obviously worked at some distance from direct management oversight. The spotters not only represented the lack of trust between management and workers but were also a reminder of management’s ultimate control over the work. See Paul Michel Taillon, "Culture, Politics, and the Making of the Railroad Brotherhoods, 1863-1916" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1997), 48-9. For workplace control, see David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

15. For an interesting discussion of railroad space, see John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983). Unfortunately, Stilgoe’s romantic vision of railroads largely focused on their ability to spread the metropolis into the countryside. He said little about trains in the city, other than at terminals, and little about freight trains anywhere. He suggested, “Every railroad right-of-way shared in the glamour that lingered like the whiff of coal smoke left after the all-Pullman express had passed” (p. 71). Clearly, he was not writing about the smoke clouds issuing from freight locomotives moving back and forth through urban neighborhoods. As complaints from around the nation made clear, this was hardly glamorous.

16. Christopher Sellers has argued that the factory should be seen as part of the environment and that those who attempted to make factories cleaner, more healthful places should be seen as contributors to the developing environmentalism of the early 1900s. Unfortunately, Sellers studied the workplace only from perspectives other than those of the workers. His focus remained on chemists, industrial hygienists, and the legal profession. See Christopher Sellers, “Factory as Environment: Industrial Hygiene, Professional Collaboration and the Modern Sciences of Pollution,” *Environmental History Review* 18 (spring 1994): 55-84, and *Hazards of the Job*.


18. Nancy Hewitt argued that middle-class reformers “assumed that home and city were two distinct entities and that the latter could be improved by an infusion of values from the former.” See Nancy A. Hewitt, “Politicking Domesticity: Anglo, Black, and Latin Women in Tampa’s Progressive Movements,” in *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*, Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, eds. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), 27. The vision of city as home ran contrary to the nineteenth-century perception of the home as sanctuary, as a structure designed to keep the city at bay. Indeed, the movement away from this perception after 1900 may in part explain the middle-class reform fervor of the Progressive Era. In other words, progressivism itself indicated the decreased sense that families could be “islands of prosperity” within the industrial chaos of the city. For nineteenth-century conceptions of home and family, see Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For a discussion of “islands of prosperity,” see Richard Sennett, *Families against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

19. See Peter C. Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford, 1850-1930* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999) for a wonderfully rich discussion of middle-class reformers’ efforts to assert control over public space in Connecticut’s largest city. David O. Stowell has also offered a valuable reinterpretation of the Great Strike of 1877, arguing that the railroad’s intrusion on the city, particularly the deaths and injuries from accidents on city streets, produced an antirailroad sentiment that helped create the “crowds” that made the strike “great.” Oddly, Stowell said almost nothing about the noise and smoke created by locomotives. Although Stowell’s analysis concerns an era nearly fifty years before Yates’s arrest, it does suggest a long-standing middle-class concern for the intrusion of the “industrial revolution incarnate” in the heart of cities. David O. Stowell, *Streets, Railroads, and the Great Strike of 1877* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

21. The Smoke Abatement League’s membership included many of the city’s most important residents (both male and female), including Julius Fleischmann, William Proctor, William Alms, Andreas Burkhardt, and Mrs. Henry Pogue, in addition to Charles P. Taft, his wife, and his brother, William Howard Taft. See the membership lists that accompanied the league’s annual reports, held at the Cincinnati Historical Society.

22. See, for example, Frederick Law Olmsted and Harlan Page Kelsey, *The Smoke Nuisance* (Harrisburg, PA: American Civic Association Department of Nuisances, 1908). Olmsted and Kelsey noted, “It is obvious that the proper training of firemen has been sadly neglected” (p. 14).


27. Ibid., 5-6, 50-2, 141-3.

28. In 1915, Brother Fred Thurlow thoroughly reviewed the arguments against smoke, including a brief summary of the costs of soot damage to merchants and homeowners and the health risks for everyone living in smoky cities. *Locomotive Firemen’s and Enginemen’s Magazine* 58 (May 1915), 520; see also 43 (November 1907), 636-9; 49 (July 1910), 64; and 55 (December 1913), 758-63. The magazine reprinted two articles concerning proper firing written by engineers in management, Alfred Gibbs and David Crawford, both motive power engineers at the Pennsylvania.


32. In Cincinnati, for example, the very effective but controversial smoke inspector Matthew Nelson was removed in 1911 in favor of Arthur Hall, an engineer who took a much less aggressive stance toward polluters. See David Stradling, “To Breathe Pure Air: Cincinnati’s Smoke Abatement Crusade, 1904-1916,” *Queen City Heritage* 55 (spring 1997): 3-18.

33. Miller suggested an alternative solution, however, arguing that the company should install ring blowers, which were similar to but quieter than steam jets, in all locomotives. Yates’s arrest four years later on a locomotive without such a device reveals that the company did not heed Miller’s advice. Miller to H. K. Brady, April 11, 1919, PA RR Mss, box 1319, folder 23.


35. For contemporary references to municipal housekeeping, see Mrs. T. J. Bowker, “Woman’s Home-Making Function Applied to the Municipality,” *American City* 6 (1912): 863-9, and Mary Ritter Beard, *Women’s Work in Municipalities* (New York: D. Appleton, 1915), especially 45-96. My interpretation of the meaning of civilization does not fit well with that of Gail Bederman. Bederman described the discourse of civilization as supporting white male dominance in society. While evidence certainly supports her argument, Bederman failed to discuss the most important female contributions to this male-centered discourse. To most middle-class men and women, civilization required cleanliness, morality, and healthfulness. Women worked to improve civilization through the temperance movement, settlement houses, and a host of environmental movements, including smoke abatement. As they conducted this work, they spoke and wrote extensively about civilization and in the process helped define the term. In this way, women contributed to the changing discourse on civilization that Bederman discussed and influenced it deeply, particularly through their own visions of a domesticated city. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Unfortunately, Bederman did not note the work of Paul Boyer, whose *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978) should have influenced her thinking on the role of women in defining civilization.


For a discussion of railroads in Cincinnati, see Carl Condit, The Railroad and the City: A Technological and Urbanistic History of Cincinnati (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977).

39. Nelson to James McCrea, July 25, 1911, and J. J. Turner to Nelson, August 8, 1911, PA RR Mss, box 1279, folder 1. For public criticism of the company, see, for example, the Times-Star editorial "A New Pamphleteer," March 15, 1916, which was so scathing that General Manager B. McKeen sent Barnard to visit the editors in an attempt to “go over the matter.” McKeen to David Crawford, April 7, 1916, PA RR Mss, box 1279, folder 1.


42. Rochester to Geer, October 27, 1923, PA RR Mss, box 440, folder 6.

43. Specifically, Miller and Karns argued in favor of a system similar to that which prevailed in Chicago, where the smoke department operated under a citizen’s commission. In addition, in Chicago, a railroad smoke abatement board, with representatives from labor and management, handled all railroad cases. Only repeat offenses were handled in the courts. Pennsy found this arrangement “very satisfactory,” since in nearly four years it had not had a single case heard in court. This arrangement was also more satisfactory to the brotherhood, which had demanded the change in 1919. The Chicago railroad smoke board consisted of firemen, engineers, a master mechanic, a superintendent, and two city officials. Geer to Rochester, December 1, 1923, PA RR Mss, box 440, folder 6.

44. Geer’s concession to Yates contained no evidence of it, but perhaps the appeal process had deepened his appreciation for the difficulty of maintaining smokelessness. Even Barnard admitted, months later, when discussing the arrest of firemen generally, that trains “frequently have to make sudden stops to avoid striking street cars or vehicles on the cross streets and it is pretty hard, under such conditions not to make some smoke, particularly with newly built up fires.” Geer to Miller and Karns, December 31, 1923, and Barnard to Geer, June 23, 1924, PA RR Mss, box 440, folder 6.

45. More to McKeen, April 21, 1924, and Barnard to Geer, May 7, 1924, PA RR Mss, box 440, folder 6.
46. For more than a decade, the Superintendents’ Committee in Cincinnati had funded its own smoke department, headed by G. H. Funk. As was common in smoky cities, local rail companies divided the cost of his salary and the salaries of his aids, which at times numbered as many as six. Funk and his men made observations, gave instructions, and informed the companies of the performances of their men. Funk also kept in contact with city inspectors to give the impression that the railroads were serious about smoke abatement. Funk’s data for 1923 and 1924 indicated that the Pennsylvania was far from the smokiest railroad. Barnard to Geer, February 14, 1923, and May 7, 1924, PA RR Mss, box 440, folder 6.

THE FEDERAL ICARUS
The Public Rejection of 1970s National Suburban Planning

NICHOLAS BLOOM
Tulane University

Few episodes in recent urban history better illustrate the growing divide between elite tastes and mainstream suburban values than the demise of Title VII, the 1970s federal new-town program. Title VII, which subsidized real estate developers willing to commit to unorthodox suburban planning, was typical of the public-private partnerships that, for better or worse, have come to dominate urban policy since World War II. Although historians and public policy experts have seen all of Title VII as a failure, this article draws a much needed distinction between the program and its public reception. This distinction brings into focus both the accomplishments of new-town reformers and the negative reaction of the suburban public to their efforts.

The initial creation of the Title VII program was a remarkable and unprecedented success on the part of liberal government interests and idealistic developers. Overcoming conservative opposition, the program’s liberal congressional supporters created effective legislation, appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars in bond guarantees, and attracted real estate developers with innovative plans. These developers, in turn, founded unconventional communities that included subsidized housing, experimental residential designs, racial integration, and alternative schools. By gaining their ends—innovative suburban communities—the planners, developers, and congressmen succeeded brilliantly.

It was when the developers asked average Americans to buy homes in these innovative places that they were promoted to their level of incompetence. They could not convince average white American suburbanites that unconventionally designed communities, boasting both architectural and social innovations, were solid investments. Reformers did not, in the end, overcome ideas of social and racial exclusivity or mainstream tastes in design. As their projects began to fail, and fail they did, they blamed themselves, the Nixon administration, and

AUTHOR’S NOTE: This article was first presented at the American Historical Association Conference, Chicago, Illinois, January 2000. Research for this article is drawn from the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s New Community Development Corporation papers at National Archives II, College Park, Maryland; legislative records; contemporary newspapers; and secondary sources from the period. Thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their challenging questions and excellent suggestions.

JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY, Vol. 28 No. 1, November 2001 55-71
© 2001 Sage Publications
the economy but refused to acknowledge the public role in their demise. To acknowledge public rejection, and the existence of an entirely separate world of public tastes, would have been to admit that their own assessment of the desires of suburbanites, and Americans in general, had been far off the mark. The difficulty of marketing a product consumers disliked proved too great a burden for private developers, even those subsidized by the federal government.

THE NEW-TOWN PARADIGM

It is no exaggeration to say that the new-town concept held an irresistible attraction to reformers and planners of the 1960s and 1970s. Faced with both growing suburban conservatism and community-oriented urban activism that resisted planning, the new town offered an end run around potential conflict by shifting the locus of reform from existing suburban and urban areas to a tabula rasa where experimentation would become the norm. According to the authors of a major evaluation of new towns from the 1970s, New Communities U.S.A., “the appeal of new communities stems from the prospect of combining the solutions to many problems in one package developed from scratch and unconstrained by past errors.” Past errors, according to planners and their allies, included racial and social isolation, repetitive housing design, and the suburban shopping strip—many of the same qualities most suburban residents viewed as desirable.

Although planners never admitted their own biases, they were caught up in an exciting and international new-town movement. In Europe, in particular, the new town was enjoying its greatest popularity. The new town or garden city originated with the ideas of turn-of-the-century visionary Ebenezer Howard and had led to picturesque planned towns like Letchworth and Welwyn.

By the 1950s and 1960s, the new town had become part of a comprehensive reshaping of Western European society. Hitched to social democratic policies, new towns had become an experimental new world for workers and middle-class citizens alike. Enormous public and private investment in new towns, directed by public authorities at both the national and local levels, was designed to create new cities that would avoid the problems of older cities and reflect the social idealism of the postwar era. Tapiola, Farsta, Runcorn, Cumbernauld, Harlow, among others, were model new towns that transported their residents to a world with fewer social distinctions and abundant recreational and social resources. Planners at the new towns, in the thrall of modernist fashion, distilled these towns into mutually exclusive planned zones of housing, work, recreation, civic functions, and traffic. Modernist commercial/civic town centers and residential villages (with the separation of pedestrians and motor vehicles), mass transportation and highway links, acres of open
spaces, and abundant recreational facilities characterized most European new-town environments.

These towns had tremendous influence far beyond their borders. Planners from America, many of whom visited the towns, admired the bold designs and gazed enviously on the public and governmental support that made large-scale new-town programs possible. American new-town proponents, however, did not simply copy European models. The American new-town movement, in part due to the influence of European new towns, developed a split between conservative and experimental projects.

On one side were the “community builder” suburban developers like William Levitt (Levittowns) and Donald Bren (Mission Viejo, California). These builders in the postwar period built large-scale suburban communities with slightly better designed community facilities and overall plans. Restrictions on garish advertising as well as strict zoning and covenants regulated life in these communities. Designed for either middle- or upper-middle-class Americans, developers avoided social and architectural innovations. Communities like these, often called new towns, actually derived from a tradition of American suburban development that had its roots in elite communities like Roland Park, Maryland, and Country Club District, Kansas. Most builders of the modern new towns, like developers before them, sought to profit from the creation of an attractive suburban environment.

A separate American new-town movement, and one much smaller than the more conventional suburban model described above, grew out of the intellectual suburban critique and European new-town models. Reporters, sociologists, and architectural critics during the 1950s and 1960s mixed aesthetic, environmental, social, and cultural observations in a full-fledged attack on suburban life. Some real estate developers, themselves frustrated by suburban failings, adopted the language of the suburban critique and tried to design communities that would answer the criticism. A compromise, as remedy, emerged that combined the bold modernism of European new towns, social innovation, and American suburban styles. Columbia, Maryland; Reston, Virginia; and Irvine, California all reflected, to varying degrees, this experimental mixture. One found in Reston, for instance, a bold, modernist village center surrounded by contemporary attached homes just down the road from conventional split-levels and cul-de-sacs. Irvine developed an architecturally innovative village planning system and featured a modernist university campus at its center. Columbia, which featured a mixture of social planning (including racial integration and subsidized housing), modernist designs, and conventional suburban styling, was generally seen as the most successful in achieving the new-town vision by the late 1960s. The press heralded these new communities for their innovative spirit, but already by 1968 Reston had suffered such serious financial problems that many elements of its alternative design had been jettisoned. A mixture of modernist and conventional elements had proved difficult to market to consumers, and the developer lacked sufficient backing.
That Columbia and Reston developed close to Washington, D.C., made a difference in the federal government’s assessment of new towns. Although unintentional in their placement, these new towns received abundant attention in newspapers like the *Washington Post* during the 1960s. Quite a number of government officials had lived in Reston, and many more visited Columbia and Reston during their early years. Hundreds of articles in magazines and newspapers both in the region and the nation helped keep attention focused on these two communities. The familiarity of public officials with the trials and triumphs of these idealistic new towns played a role in inspiring federal action. Federal officials knew that new towns in America could be more ambitious, but they also knew that after the problems at Reston it was unlikely that private developers would take such a risk on unconventional development. Reston and Columbia had demonstrated the possibility of idealistic new towns in America, but they had done little to increase the probability of more ambitious new towns in the future.6

**AN UPHILL BATTLE**

The creation of a new-town planning program was a hard fought battle at the federal level. Government officials, in order to justify an expensive new program, had to stake out a territory for action that would be distinct from private new-town development under way without government support. A series of national commissions during the late 1960s, staffed with many planners and urban specialists, issued studies that called for national action on metropolitan sprawl.7 As federal officials reviewed what had been accomplished in suburban reform, most American new towns received only mixed reviews. Carlos Campbell, a former administrator at the new-towns programs and author of an important book in support of the program from 1976, reflected the attitudes and aims of federal new-town supporters:

> The main shortcomings of [privately developed] new towns are that they are of little value insofar as providing housing opportunities for low and moderate income families; they are located principally where they will market well, as opposed to where they are needed; they are not tied to any regional or national growth strategy; and they are not connected by rail to downtown metropolitan areas.

Campbell, like other proponents of federal new towns, judged American new-town efforts against the European new-town standard. Most American new towns, and even Columbia and Reston, did not approach European new towns in terms of social mixture; most had not developed as part of a national growth policy; and most were not connected by mass transit to older city centers.8

Idealistic as American new-town supporters were, they were not naïve. They knew that they stood little chance of convincing housing interests,
Congress, or the president to support full government sponsorship of new towns such as the ones found in much of Europe. The failure of New Deal–planned new towns was not distant from memory, and conservative forces by the late 1960s had a stronger hand. Thomas Ashley, Democratic congressman from Ohio and primary sponsor of federal new-town legislation of 1968 and 1970, had visited the European new towns during the 1960s and came back impressed by what he had seen. He knew, however, that it would be difficult to duplicate European experiences here. Ashley admitted that “success in this kind of effort could not be obtained by any kind of frontal assault on the established development process.” Instead, he explained that

the idea would be to pose an alternative form of development that, on the basis of sheer competition, would be so much superior to the living opportunities to the extent they exist at all for people of lesser means, that this form of development would begin to enjoy a considerable reputation.

Just as a private new town of the 1960s like Columbia represented a compromise between conventional and contemporary elements, so the federal new-town program would be a hybrid program combining federal largess with private action.

A series of congressional acts had progressively increased government underwriting of privately developed new towns. In 1965, Congress had allowed the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to insure mortgages, up to $25 million, for large-scale planned projects. Known as Title X, it attracted little attention. The year 1968 marked the beginning of the first large-scale programs under what was known as Title IV, part of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. Democratic senators pushed for $500 million in support of new-town projects, but opponents succeeded in reducing the amount of aid, in part by citing problems at new towns like Columbia and Reston, to $250 million. What saved the provision in the House was a final conference committee that reinserted new-town funding. The hopes of Title IV’s framers also remained largely unmet. Although Jonathan, Minnesota, and Park Forest South, Illinois, started under provisions of this bill, most developers remained unimpressed by the financial incentives, and the Nixon administration did not act aggressively to expand the program.11

In 1970, Title VII emerged, under the guidance of Ashley, as a more substantive program of reform. Again, as part of the much larger Urban Growth and New Community Development Act of 1970, the new-town provision was saved in a conference committee (controlled by new-town proponents) after opponents had eliminated it. In the final legislation, a new corporation was created within HUD, the New Community Development Corporation (NCDC), to manage the program. A total of $500 million was apportioned in bond guarantees with a maximum set at $50 million for each development. Infrastructure and service grants as well as supplemental loans were also promised for new
According to George Morgan, an expert on Title VII new towns, the program from its inception faced difficult odds. Both it and its predecessor, The New Community Act of 1968, won congressional approval not by a clear and enthusiastic mandate but because of the determination and parliamentary skills of a hard-core minority, especially in the lower house, who outmaneuvered less skillful and often ambivalent opponents.

Morgan correctly assessed the effort involved, but like many observers, treated their success too lightly. That the legislation was secured at all proved a significant accomplishment.

The legislation provided for more than new towns and reflects the influence of European new towns on its framers. Title VII ambitiously proposed “the development of a national urban growth policy and to encourage the rational, orderly, efficient, and economic growth” of cities, suburbs, and rural areas. The plan had three main elements: the creation of a national urban growth policy, the subsidy of state planning initiatives, and the underwriting of large-scale planned new towns. Only the last of the three received attention, although according to Ashley this had not been the original intention. Framers of the legislation saw the new-town concept as part of a national replanning of American cities and underestimated American discomfort, at the highest levels, with national planning schemes. The enthusiasm for new-town projects among planners and many private developers, and the bill’s reliance on decentralization and private action, made the specific new-town provisions of the program more popular.

Federal guidelines for the privately developed new towns included basic requirements that the new towns assist with orderly physical and economic growth in their regions, be part of regional and local plans if they existed, be economically feasible, and seek a balance in residential, commercial, and public facilities. These provisions were unremarkable yet did reflect in some small measure the policies of European governments vis-à-vis national new-town planning. The last requirements mentioned reflected the more ambitious goals of congressional supporters. They required that the individual

(7) [new town] makes substantial provision for housing within the means of persons of low and moderate income and that such housing will constitute an appropriate proportion of the community’s housing supply; and

(8) will make significant use of advances in design and technology with respect to land utilization, materials and methods of construction, and the provision of community facilities and services.

In these last provisions, Ashley and his supporters imitated European new-town developments (and more ambitious American towns like Reston and Columbia) that pioneered social and design innovations. Title VII called
openly for “the increase for all persons, particularly members of minority
groups, the available choices of location for living and working, thereby
encouraging a more just economic and social environment.” Ashley
reminded his colleagues in the House during debate on the legislation that “we
are not going to be creating new lily-white suburbs.” The program did not set
specific targets, but new-town proposals were to be evaluated on their commit-
ment to meeting these goals through either subsidized housing or affirmative
marketing programs. During the operation of Title VII, proposals were indeed
assessed on their commitment to these provisions.

Congressmen admired the products of European planning, but they did not
adopt the British system of new-town sponsorship that created separate agen-
cies responsible for individual community development. Nor did the govern-
ment propose to undertake direct construction of communities as had been
done during the New Deal and in much of Western and Eastern Europe after
World War II. Title VII stated instead that the government would “rely to the
maximum extent on private enterprise” in the creation of new towns. At heart,
congressmen sought to harness the power of private enterprise for public pol-
icy, believing they could save the government money by recruiting developers
who would, through their plans, attract home buyers and their money. Title VII
thus relied on the individual choices of thousands of homeowners who would,
in theory, buy homes in these towns and thus subsidize the high development
costs of these communities. This developer-consumer structure also helped
avoid accusations of socialism and big government spending in a time of grow-
ing social and fiscal conservatism.

The NCDC, created to manage the program within HUD, was not directly
building new communities or even closely overseeing them. It was primarily a
means to force the Nixon administration to speed up its efforts on behalf of
new-town development. That this was not a powerful agency as one might find
in Europe is clear from the activities of the NCDC. The corporation oversaw a
decentralized planning process designed to match the market orientation of the
program. The government did not design or mandate a single model of the
rational, orderly suburb it envisioned. The central office of NCDC in Washing-
ton, D.C., had only financial and administrative roles, evaluating programs and
arranging financing. There was no high-profile national plan, nor were there
famous planners involved in the federal office. Instead, each new town had to
hire its own planning and administrative staff to develop unique plans. Con-
gress believed that developers under this system would be more likely to create
communities that, while innovative, would be commercially successful.

What the supporters of Title VII did not take into account was the enormous
power of the new-town concept at the time. Instead of underwriting different
models of development, they gave their blessing to a group of remarkably sim-
ilar projects. Much as had occurred at Columbia and Reston, developers pro-
posed a mixture of elements from both European new towns and conventional
suburban communities. The dominant new-town ideal affirmed in the
legislation guided the planning to such a great extent that the well-intentioned goal of decentralized planning only raised the costs and complexity for developers without adding significantly to the degree of originality, marketability, or fit to local areas. The towns varied more in scale than style.

Between 1970 and 1973, NCDC approved sixteen towns, although all did not receive loan guarantees. Combined population goals of the towns near 800,000 residents. Accepted proposals came from ten states and ranged from approximately two thousand to seventeen thousand acres in size. By 1973, almost $325 million had been committed in bond guarantees, with individual towns receiving between $7 million and $50 million each, as well as some direct grants for infrastructure and services. Twelve of the sixteen projects were in metropolitan areas with population growth higher than the national average between 1960 and 1970, and four of the new towns were located in areas with almost three times the national average growth rate. The goal of organizing fast-growing sprawl thus seemed possible. Reflecting the program’s popularity with developers, almost fifty more projects were on application at the national office.

Most developers seemed genuinely committed to meeting the spirit of the statutory requirements. Although these plans were remarkably similar in their approach to planning, they were convincing realizations of the general goals of the new-town supporters. The numerous plans mixed standard, single-family suburban housing and cul-de-sacs with a wide range of housing types (including high-rise apartments and contemporary, experimental buildings), residential villages with the separation of pedestrians and vehicles, urbanistic town center plans, attractive industrial parks, public transportation plans, significant open-space preservation, subsidized housing, and racial integration.  

If completed, these towns would have had a significant impact on their respective metropolitan areas. Developers planned communities of thousands of acres of land each and target populations numbering between 30,000 and 150,000 residents. Examples included Soul City New Town, North Carolina, founded by civil rights leader Floyd McKissick in 1972, designed as a means to black empowerment in the rural South. The developer of Jonathan, Minnesota, planned a suburban town of low-profile modern architecture, abundant lakes, and open spaces. The Woodlands, outside Houston, nestled new housing and commercial facilities in an ecologically sensitive landscape. Shenandoah, Georgia, experimented with solar energy collectors on housing and industrial buildings.

In upstate New York, Robert Simon (ousted founder of the innovative town of Reston, Virginia) proposed to create a new town known as Riverton that would one day house 25,000 residents on 2,500 acres. The plan envisioned single-family homes filling 60 percent of the total housing but also included a significant number of townhouses, garden apartments, and high-rises. The developer
also proposed that nearly 40 percent of this housing would be available to low- and moderate-income inhabitants. Residents would also be able in the future to enjoy an urbanistic town center, an extensive open-space system, and attractive industrial parks. The plan included experiments in team architectural design, modular home construction, public art, a community medical program, adult education, and mass transportation systems. Construction on the town had started by the early 1970s.21

Some towns moved faster toward achieving their goals. Approved under Title IV in 1968 and integrated into the Title VII program, Park Forest South seemed well on its way to success by the early 1970s and quickly attracted thousands of residents. A mixture of apartment complexes, townhouses, and single-family homes characterized the new landscape. Affirmative action brought a mix of white and black residents to the community, a public art program received a boost from the National Endowment for the Arts, an open classroom elementary school offered the latest innovations in education, industrial parks proved popular with many businesses, open spaces and a lake softened the landscape, and an incorporated town government gave residents a strong voice in local issues. Governors State University, a $24 million state-funded project, provided its students ungraded continuing education. An idealistic developer, Lewis Manilow, seemed to have it all together.

Jonathan was another community well on its way to achieving similar goals in the early 1970s. Founded by Henry McKnight, a powerful and wealthy environmentalist and state senator, the town in the early years more than achieved the goals set by the new-town proponents. On the distant edge of Minneapolis, it featured man-made lakes, abundant open spaces, and contemporary supergraphics plastered on an old silo. Striking play furniture and public art added modern accents to the suburban setting. Racial integration was the norm, and even a black entrepreneur operated a construction business there. The activities of the few residents included a summer theater festival, a child care center, a teen center, an art center, and a Renaissance fair. Apartment houses and single-family homes nestled among the former farm fields. Experiments in modular housing led to some strangely stacked trailer structures in the middle of a field, and a high-rise was planned.

These three examples illustrate the ambition of the developers and the success of the program’s founders in attracting alternative designs. Innovative features like these, and similar ones in other Title VII new towns across the country, distinguished these communities from conventional suburban developments. The congressmen and other planners had proven correct in their estimation that sufficient interest existed among developers and planners to shape a national new-town program. The question of sufficient public interest was soon answered.
THE FALL

The Title VII program began on an idealistic note, and these towns were ready to grow. The program, however, began to collapse at the very point it should have reached maturity. The towns proved difficult to market and grew more slowly than predicted. The recession of 1974 slowed housing construction on a national level but delivered a blow to the new towns from which most never recovered. Soul City, for instance, planned to house 46,000 residents had only 160 by 1980. Jonathan, Minnesota, planned to house 50,000 residents but had only 3,000 in 1982. Riverton, even after $24 million of government investment, housed only 1,200 residents in 1980, and the development company had declared bankruptcy (Simon’s second failure). Even Park Forest South, with nearly 6,900 residents, was bankrupt by 1976.

Most developers, although well meaning and idealistic, faced financial ruin during the 1970s economic downturn. But problems had started even before the recession. Some developers lacked experience; others failed to find sufficient financial backing or projected unrealistic growth rates. Many of the new towns were, at that time, on the outer edge of suburban development and, so, less attractive to many commuters. Local governments, often suspicious of the urbanistic plans, placed extra burdens on developers by not aiding in the creation of local services. Extra amenities and services, in combination with high costs for planning, taxed developers’ limited resources.

Above all, and it is the main contention of this article, the mixture of market-rate single-family homes with unconventional architecture, high-density housing, industrial parks, racial integration, and subsidized housing alienated many potential builders and residents. Even in the best of times, these communities would have had problems, just as Reston did in the 1960s. American builders, the group most sensitive to public taste, were slow to show interest in these communities: “Either developers could not find builders interested in buying lots, or they were not building, themselves, because of a lack of money to do so and/or because of insufficient demand.” Those builders who took the risk, or developers who built their own housing, found that new towns “were not as attractive to most homebuyers as might have been expected.”

Developers were not just building places, after all; they were asking average middle-class Americans to take what many perceived as a financial risk on an untested product. This circumstance has never been properly acknowledged. In retrospect, while home buyers might have qualified for mortgages guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the developers were much better protected than average home buyers, who risked much of their credit to buy homes.

Popular rejection and indifference is evident in an NCDC marketing report from 1979 that found, among the many reasons for failure at Park Forest South, Illinois, for instance, that “the relatively high densities located near the core have created an environment perceived as urban and therefore undesirable by a
large proportion of prospective residents.” Other factors that contributed to Park Forest South’s poor reputation among potential white middle-class buyers, although not necessarily black buyers and renters, included “the involvement of the federal government” and “a growing minority presence among the project’s residents.” Soul City not only was too far from Raleigh to attract commuters but also had “a minority image.” Shenandoah, Georgia, also suffered from a marketing problem . . . the lot sizes may be too small to attract many potential home buyers; county officials and residents also perceive it be a “low income project,” since almost one-half of its units constitute some form of assisted housing.

At Jonathan, Minnesota, the marketing director admitted that the developer had stressed architectural innovation in a community where “95 percent of the people wanted traditional housing.” These were not isolated examples. According to a summary report from 1983, innovative housing types and technological innovations were pioneered at many new towns only to be later abandoned because of popular rejection or poor design. Racial integration was also the norm in these new towns, and the towns did attract a small group of idealistic black and white buyers. By December of 1983, “nearly half of the Title VII communities [had] minority populations equal to or greater than are found in their market areas”—a strong showing for new suburban developments. Other new towns in the program were not as successful, but they were all integrated. Plans for subsidized housing in six of the towns either met or exceeded projections and in six towns constituted half or more of the total housing units built by the 1980s. Almost all of the new towns, whether they met goals or not, included subsidized housing units. In addition, “the majority of the Title VII communities [had] achieved a higher residential density than that found in conventional development patterns.” Rental housing and attached housing thus occupied an important place in all of the towns, and even single-family homes were reasonably priced. The report noted that “by developing communities which are more economically and racially diverse than other types of development, Title VII developers were being innovative within their market areas.” These reports, usually conducted by independent experts, revealed what developers understandably tried to conceal. Innovation had not packed in suburban buyers and over time alienated not only white suburban buyers but almost all potential buyers. The few new towns that did survive the 1970s, like the Woodlands, Texas, and St. Charles, Maryland, abandoned radical social and design aspects and became more conventional “community builder” developments.

Discomfort with the mandates of the program, in an era that turned its back on many of the ideals of the 1960s, extended to the highest levels of government. The Nixon administration’s unwillingness to provide promised grants for public facilities made these towns even harder to market to wary
consumers. A study by an independent auditing firm found that initial savings gained from government subsidy of 1.5 to 2 percent per project decreased to only 0.2 percent in practice because of the failure to receive promised grants and extra administrative costs engendered by dealing with NCDC. The central office of NCDC processed applications slowly, and rapid staff turnover (perhaps intentional on the part of the Nixon administration) made program continuity difficult. Efforts were made to save a few of the new towns, but most towns were terminated as Title VII projects by the Carter and Reagan administrations. A majority of the new towns were sold off in pieces, and development of unified plans generally ceased. Government officials of the 1970s and 1980s, when confronted with popular indifference and the financial problems of developers, did not pursue the program.

What made developers and congressmen think that suburban consumers wanted an alternative? Perhaps they were too strongly influenced by the suburban critique, the counterculture, and civil-rights-era activities to see the persistence of conventional attitudes. Thomas Ashley asserted in 1973 that “the young people today don’t want to live in a lily white suburb.” He also, somewhat naively, proposed that “at no time has there been, to the best of my knowledge and understanding, any criticism of the requirement that there be a racial or income mix in a new community.” From the marketing reports, it is clear that although open criticism would have been unthinkable, white consumers were voting with their feet. In this respect, the federal new-town program reflects post-civil-rights-era attitudes on race relations that have maintained racial segregation at a high level without explicitly crossing legal lines.

The new-town suspects were gathered in 1975 before the House Committee on Housing and Community Development (of which Ashley was a member). Private developers recommended changes in the program, congressmen grilled HUD officials on their management of the program, and new community developers offered their own reasons for the sad state of the program. Lester Gross, developer of Harbison, a Title VII new town in South Carolina, and president of the League of New Community Developers, gave the consensus statement on behalf of the Title VII developers (paraphrased in the minutes):

He outlined problems caused [to] new communities by the economic downturn, cutbacks in Federal program expenditures, the cancellation of sub-programs of the Title VII program, the moratorium on new applications and consequent adverse publicity and the rapid turnover in the leadership of the program.

James Rouse, developer of Columbia, Maryland, and a major proponent of Title VII, lamented that “the government seems to be satisfied with the view that Title VII is a ‘disaster’ and rather than encourage or assist it properly, the mechanisms of government have in fact impeded and frustrated new town development.” Although the reasons for failure given by Rouse and others
were true, they all concealed a disturbing and damning fact. Part of the formula that had made the private new-town projects attractive to the federal government was the money the suburban public, rather than the government, would provide to each town in the form of mortgages. Conspicuous by its absence from the discussion at this hearing was the public, the silent majority that held back its money and watched while the towns floundered.

Like those in attendance at the hearing, much of what has been written about federal new towns has stressed the program’s poor management and the economic recession as the primary reasons for the ultimate demise. As I have shown, the NCDC and the developers were not as incompetent as many historians or observers would lead one to believe. Were successful developers of conventional tract developments so much more talented? Something else had impeded these developers, a quality that transcended economics. Although new-town promoters stressed a change in tactics and program design to correct past developer and administrative missteps, the ideological basis of the program never came under the same critical eye. Discussions of tactics obscured the more problematic reason for failure: the uneasy relationship of Title VII to the wider public.

Americans, by the 1970s, had become accustomed to a very different role for the federal government in suburbia. Undermining the suburban reform goals of Title VII were the much larger FHA and federal highway programs. Title VII legislation is silent on changes in FHA (that subsidized home loans) and highway programs that simultaneously supported sprawl. By the 1970s, billions of dollars had been spent on these programs that helped maintain social and racial segregation and undermined traditional city centers. Although many of the new towns stood to benefit from nearby highways and federal mortgage financing, the majority of federal financing during this period continued to go to homogeneous suburban developments that lacked innovative planning and social integration. This river of government support flowed from a different ideological source.

FHA financing and federal highway spending, while mandating a tremendous, long-term role of the federal government in suburban development, did not appear as intrusive community planning to ordinary citizens. The FHA funneled subsidies indirectly to developers through mortgage bankers. FHA lending policies also enshrined the traditions of private development. Private developers had, in essence, written FHA rules that incorporated already popular suburban qualities like single-family homes and social exclusivity. Conventional ideas of race, class, and design canonized in mainstream attitudes found a home in new suburban developments. Informal and secretive regulation of the neighborhood by mortgage bankers and real estate agents did not feel like planning, although it was in reality a kind of conservative social planning. Federal mortgage underwriting, even after the liberal reforms of the 1960s, supported the status quo, not an alternative.
Congress had tried to imitate this system of sponsorship when promoting the new towns. Not only was indirect subsidy to developers through NCDC done for cost reasons, but it was designed to screen a much more direct, liberal, and technocratic government presence in suburbia. Few politicians or ordinary Americans were fooled. The NCDC and the new towns it sponsored were not as closely attuned to private real estate interests and American mainstream values as the FHA and conventional subdivisions. The federal government, to many, was acting in a technocratic, even socialistic, manner by trying to mandate innovative planning concepts and social experimentation in new suburban communities. The new town was not as value neutral as its proponents seemed to think.

Promoters of Title VII had mistaken elite desires—as embodied in the social justice and new-town movements of the 1960s—and the suburban critique as popular concerns. Social reforms and design mandates that flowed from these elite conceptions of the good society had been transferred to private developers, not eliminated. Even a casual visitor would have immediately sensed a difference. What were apartments doing next to new single-family homes? What was subsidized housing doing near single-family homes? What were these strange-looking contemporary shopping centers and townhouses? Black people living next to white people in new suburbs? Solar energy and innovative cultural programs in a new suburb? The order and predictability of standard suburbia had been disturbed in the new towns. For this reason, white middle-class Americans did not line up to live in these places. Such popularity, for instance, might well have eliminated many of the financial problems that eventually occurred.

Title VII proved itself to be the Icarus of government programs. It began strong and ambitious but set its sights too high. A successful, effective program fell to earth. The program’s fall brought empty streets, decaying apartment complexes, more conservative developers, and land auctions. Perhaps more important, its demise clouded the historical picture of the program, making it appear as though the whole undertaking lacked any focus, competence, or support from the beginning. As this article has shown, however, nothing could be further from the truth. The program worked remarkably well under its constraints.

Yet its constraints were real. In many respects, Title VII reflected the general trend toward privatization of public policy since World War II. The idea of harnessing private talents for the public interest, in the hope of saving money and circumventing public bureaucracies, has become over the past fifty years the dominant attitude in public policy from the local to the national level. As this article has shown, however, involvement of the private sector does not guarantee, and may undercut, the achievement of more ambitious social policy goals. Market-based solutions to complicated social problems, as opposed to direct government involvement, may not prove to be the hoped-for panacea of urban affairs.
1. Urban renewal projects, beginning in the 1940s and continuing in one form or another to this day, pioneered the combination of public subsidy and private development. Urban renewal, often seen as a giveaway to private interests at the expense of the poor and minorities, has a mixed reputation to this day. See, for instance, James Q. Wilson, ed., Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1967); Mel Scott, American City Planning Since 1890 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Joel Schwartz, The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993); and Arnold Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).


4. Heikki von Hertzen, in Building a New Town: Finland’s New Garden City (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971), provided a tour in pictures and words of one of the most attractive and successful of the new-town developments, Tapiola. The integration of modernist buildings with natural elements and social and cultural planning (the city was built by a group of social and trade organizations) influenced American new-town efforts. Pierre Merlin, New Towns: Regional Planning and Development (London: Methuen, 1971), and Ann Louise Strong, Planned Urban Environments: Sweden, Finland, Israel, the Netherlands, France (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), summarize the variations in international new-town planning.

5. In the 1950s and 1960s, critics, including Lewis Mumford, The City in History (New York: Harcourt, 1961), praised older suburban communities but condemned the middle-class escape into suburbia. Generalizing from a series of psychological case histories, Richard E. Gordon, Katherine K. Gordon, and Max Gunther in The Split-Level Trap (New York: Dell, 1964), characterized the new suburbia as “disturbia,” a community lacking a strong social fabric. John Keats, in The Crack in the Picture Window (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), described the travails of a fictional suburban family fighting the restrictions and temptations of suburban life. John Seeley, Alexander Sim, and Elizabeth Loosely, in Crestwood Heights (New York: Basic Books, 1956), offered readers an in-depth portrait of a wealthy Canadian suburban community. Although more sociological than ideological in outlook, their unflinching portrait of the materialism of the suburb, the social pressures, and the obsession with child rearing was not flattering. William Whyte, in The Organization Man (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), described Park Forest, a planned contemporary suburb of Chicago, as the ideal home for the aspiring young executive. These suburbanites had little privacy and engaged in an upward spiral of consumption. David Reisman, in The Lonely Crowd (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), bemoaned the rise of the “other directed” personality in the 1950s. Although not directly aimed at suburbanites, the piece criticized the growing consumerism, the focus on group values rather than individual values, and the oppression of women in suburbia. Betty Friedan, in The Feminine Mystique (New York: Norton, 1963), condemned the isolation of women in suburbia and the inflation of motherhood and housework to a calling.


7. The president’s National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, the National Commission on Urban Problems, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, the American Institute of Planners, and the National Committee on Urban Growth Policy all issued reports demanding a federal role in planning for a better urban future. Most recommended some form of planned new towns to shape future urban growth.


9. Ibid., 196.

10. Ibid.

12. Title X of the Housing and Urban Development Act, approved in 1965, led to about twenty-five projects, involving ten thousand acres and $50 million in support, receiving approval. Title IV of 1968 was slow to start, the first communities not receiving approval until 1970. Programs started under Title IV (Park Forest South, Illinois, and Jonathan, Minnesota) were integrated into the Title VII program passed in 1970. Title VII also included grants to states and regions for planning and opened the possibility of creating a demonstration project, but the record indicates little interest in these provisions. See Congressional Record, 90th Cong., 2d sess. (1968), 20562, 20597, 15266-71, 20087, 23682-23689, 23691; Congressional Record, 91st Cong., 2d sess. (1970), 39461-62, 39465, 39479-99, 39831, 40916, 41339, 42299-314, 42316, 42438, 42442, 42629-31, 42635.


15. Congressional Record, December 17, 1970, 42307.


19. Ibid.


21. See HUD, Office of New Communities Development, “Report on Riverton.” The legislation also allowed for smaller new-towns-in-town within existing urban areas, a measure demanded by urban mayors. Two projects received approval, Cedar-Riverside, Minnesota, and Park Central, Houston. The idealistic developers of Cedar-Riverside (1971) proposed to house nearly thirty thousand residents in stark modern high-rises and town homes on 340 acres. Eighty percent of the units were to be available for low-income residents. Cedar-Riverside initiated an ambitious cultural program, preserving local arts institutions, subsidizing new ones, and commissioning attractive public art. Developers there also promised “a central hydroponic power system . . . an environmentally controlled commercial center, a people mover system, experimental educational programs, comprehensive health and insurance systems and industrialized building techniques.” This project was only partially built. New Community Development Corporation (NCDC), “Report on Cedar-Riverside, A New Community Proposal,” March 1971. See also Editorial, “The New Town for Cedar-Riverside,” Minneapolis Tribune, April 15, 1970.

22. HUD, Evaluation of the Federal New Communities Program, 3.8, 4.22.


24. HUD, Evaluation of the Federal New Communities Program, 4.3.


29. Quoted in Campbell, New Towns, 199.
30. Suburban segregation continues to be a concern of many sociologists, historians, and social policy experts. Most studies by historians have found little progress in genuine integration. Robert Lake, in The New Suburbanites: Race and Housing in the Suburbs (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, 1981), found blacks moving into suburban areas from which whites were fleeing. Reintegration of communities followed and perpetuated a “dual housing market for blacks and whites” (p. 240). David Kirp, John Dwyer, and Larry Rosenthal, in Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), documented the difficulties in gaining the inclusion of affordable housing, directed primarily at black residents, even after decades of legal battles. W. Dennis Keating, in The Suburban Racial Dilemma: Housing and Neighborhoods (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), discussed successful affirmative-action integration policies in Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights, as well as the more common reintegration of other suburbs. The authors in Urban Housing Segregation of Minorities in Western Europe and the United States, Elizabeth Hutman, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), pinpointed limited progress in certain suburban areas, particularly around Atlanta, Washington, and New York, but a continuation of racial segregation in most other suburban communities. Spillover from ghetto areas tends to be the most common form of black suburban expansion. Residential Apartheid: The American Legacy, Robert Bullard, J. Eugene Grigsby III, and Charles Lee, eds. (Los Angeles: CAAS Publications, 1994) documents the persistence of high degrees of segregation in all American cities and the continuing concentration of poor black families in the inner city. J. John Palen, in The Urban World (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), described the growth of the suburban black population, particularly in what are termed “inner ring” suburbs adjacent to black ghettos. He noted that “in such cases, black suburbanization can hardly be equated with racial integration” (p. 174).
31. HUD, Summary of New Community Oversight Hearings, September 29, 1975, 5.
32. Ibid., 2.
SCANDINAVIAN CHILDHOODS


It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside. . . . There is no lane so vile that the scream of a tortured child, or the thud of a drunkard’s blow, does not beget sympathy and indignation among the neighbours, and then the whole machinery of justice is ever so close that a word of complaint can set it going. . . . But look at these lonely houses, each in its own fields, filled for the most part with poor ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places.

—Conan Doyle
(“The Adventure of the Copper Breeches,”
*Stand Magazine*, 1892)

Sherlock Holmes reflects on a theme that runs through nineteenth-century legislation and expert opinion: how to make visible and protect those who should be, but are not, cared for by their families. He mentions legislation, education, and intervention by a middle-class male expert such as himself. Holmes is aware of the relative difficulty of extending this supervision to the countryside. The brutal, ignorant rural patriarch is a greater danger than the alley’s drunkard, for rural life is withdrawn from public gaze and the influence of the state—lonely, remote, and uninvestigated. Holmes is ahead of his time. Most experts agreed with Watson: the countryside was safe for dependents. The city, however, was another matter.
The three books reviewed here trace attitudes toward the care of urban and rural children, as well as views of childhood, children’s work, and gender. The main concern is with children who were without patriarchal care. Substitute socialization of urban children, who were exposed to the demoralizing effects of street leisure and work, was especially urgent. Authorities worried less about rural children, who both played and worked under the supervision of their parents. Rural life was, moreover, seen as peculiarly healthful and moral. It was the city’s factory work, ready cash, and street leisure that fostered the sickly, idle, and vicious child—just as, indeed, it created the sterile, pleasure-crazy, and egotistical woman. For practical and ideological reasons, modern measures to educate and supervise the young, themselves reflective of the ideals and prejudices of the urban middle classes, started with the urban child.

By 1900, however, city experts like Holmes were penetrating the countryside. Dreams of technical modernity, bolstered by expert investigations into the conditions of rural children, contradicted the rural ideal. By the 1930s, indeed, the city would be held up as an arena of successful child socialization, state health measures, and formal education; the countryside was now increasingly seen as backward and dirty. The urban bourgeoisie’s ideal of childhood as female-supervised and nonworking was, moreover, becoming universalized. Gradually, even rural children were included in teachers’ and experts’ modernizing projects of molding citizens. Yet, as these books show, alternative visions of childhood lived on in both urban and rural settings; indeed, the flow of attitudes across the urban-rural divide could be more fluid than supposed.

These books take differing approaches to the study of Scandinavian childhoods, in part because they typify different categories of Scandinavian scholarly work: the scholarly textbook, the published dissertation, and the project anthology. The first, Barbro Holmdahl’s *A Thousand Years in the History of the Swedish Child*, is meant to review and instruct; it is directed at student and professional child caregivers. It provides a kaleidoscope of Swedish children’s history, with thumbnail overviews of, among other things, attitudes toward corporal punishment, child feeding and handling, children’s schooling, and child and mother psychology.

The most compelling part of the book derives from the author’s close familiarity with the modern state’s policies toward children, starting with the seventeenth-century Lutheran state and church and ending with the secular, institutionalizing welfare state. The book, which is weak on argumentation and analysis, depends on the interest inherent in these sources. They provide vivid pictures of the treatment of poor children—the outcome, as Holmdahl shows, of both laudable endeavor and mass neglect; of half-hearted and pernicious institutionalization; of drastically inadequate outdoors relief; of religious preaching and moralistic punishment of begging; and of idle, delinquent, neglected, sick, and starving children. We are shown how individual children were fed, dressed, educated, overworked, neglected, beaten, and killed by state
and charity institutions ranging from the terrifying charities of the eighteenth-century church to the freedom and neglect of the nineteenth-century poor house, the high-mortality private orphanage, and the jails in which children of condemned mothers languished. Poor countries did little for poor children. Church and state institutions might attempt to teach literacy and to give the children work, training for which was seen as the moral and practical antidote to destitution. But resources were often lacking.

The children’s ability to work was, however, one reason why much of their care could be left to local authorities. There was the practice, abolished only in 1918, of auctioning off rural children. Twenty percent of turn-of-the-century foster children were placed this way. Once a year, destitute village children were assembled and clubbed off to the peasant family that demanded the lowest amount of parish child support. Small children cost most. As one farmer’s wife called out at a 1908 auction, “Beat and feed that kid potatoes, who can’t do a bit of useful work for two crowns a month, no thanks” (p. 96), but fourteen-year-old boys could be gotten rid of for nothing. Unsatisfactory children could be returned to auction the following year. The children were sold to do work. The authorities noted instances of auctioned children worked to death; most cases presumably went unrecorded, as did the deaths of children whose foster parents were too poor, sick, or old to keep them alive.

Urban demand for child servants was low. Desperate urban parents might turn, instead, to so-called angel-makers. These were foster mothers who accepted children for a one-time fee. Early-twentieth-century investigations into the fate of these children showed horrifying results. One poor old woman had taken on no fewer than fourteen children, all of whom had died. Another woman had systematically murdered her eight charges. A third was found with a dying child locked in a closet, after seven of the seventeen foster children who had passed through her hands had already died. It is hard to know how much parents and society connived at angel-making, but its acknowledged existence makes one sympathetic to Holmdahl’s relatively uncritical celebration of even the institutionalizing welfare state. Disciplinary it may be, but the children stay alive.

Holmdahl’s historical review forms a backdrop to her summary of twentieth-century welfare, where her dependence on state and expert sources, together with her own experiences as a nurse, psychologist, and professor, result in a celebration of child care professionalization and welfare-state humanism. Her concluding questions are correspondingly pedagogical: do children benefit from exposure to discipline and hardship? and how is one to evaluate the relative importance of genetics, environment, and free will? This professional orientation deters the author from overarching analyses of urban-rural divides, gender relations, and changing definitions of parenthood, education, and work. But the relationship of all of these to childhood can, as the next two works demonstrate, be usefully problematized.
Ingrid Söderlind’s *Orphanages for Girls: Children, Families and Institutional Life in Stockholm 1870-1920* is a published dissertation. Its research was sponsored, as is often the case in Sweden, within a graduate school project wherein a group of scholars receive special (state or foundation) funding to explore a particular theme—in this case, the Linköping University project Century of the Child, cofinanced by Sweden’s (state-funded) Social Science Research Council. In Sweden, the dissertation is the standard first publication. The state pays for 160 pages; private or foundation sources fund the rest. The practice of publishing dissertations greatly increases the number of books that pursue a narrow problem with close attention to sources (at the expense, perhaps, of those who use dissertation research for wider, more comparative analyses). Söderlind’s book was cofunded by the City of Stockholm and Stockholm’s General Orphanage Foundation, and it appeared under the prestigious imprint of Monographs Published by Stockholm City.

Söderlind’s account of five Stockholm orphanages, from 1870 to 1920, is a model of careful source critique. Orphanage records are painstakingly considered from what seems all possible angles, often through a barrage of (unanswerable) rhetorical questions. The dissertation’s theoretical orientation is toward Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon scholarship. A German scholar might have urged consideration of Lutheran Europe; Scandinavians’ proficiency in English, however, often leads them to prefer a transatlantic scholarly dialogue.

Söderlind explores the reasons for turn-of-the-century Stockholmers’ disproportionate interest in, and funding for, institutions for dependent girls. Destitute boys were usually sent to rural foster homes or to institutions for delinquent children. Girls, by contrast, could be accepted into a rapidly increasing number of privately funded urban institutions. The search for an answer, while largely unsuccessful, takes author and reader through a close examination of both the practical and ideological realities of urban, all-female orphanages.

The orphanages made their charges work: the girls were trained to be domestic servants. Söderlind’s first question is, accordingly, whether they simply fulfilled middle-class needs for social control and servants. Much speaks for this view. The girls’ sewing, cooking, washing, and cleaning, which also defrayed institutional expenses, were justified by pointing to their future as maids. On-site schooling was, accordingly, coupled to work training; the need to link the two was cited in the orphanages’ continuing refusal to send the girls to public schools. Most of the girls ended up, indeed, as servants in middle-class families—the same class of family that provided the bulk of orphanage support. It is easy, therefore, to suspect the institutions’ motives, especially as the early twentieth century saw a rapid expansion of alternative women’s jobs—something that, of course, caused a scarcity of female servants.

Söderlind is too careful, however, to ignore less functionalist explanations, including changing attitudes toward girls’ work and education. Domestic work was (then as now) seldom perceived as work. Bourgeois experts likened it,
rather, to the moral upbringing offered by the urban public school, a training in social efficiency and harmony. The girls’ work was also consonant with an emerging bourgeois ideal of urban childhood as female-supervised indoors activity, in preference to the male-supervised workplace and the unsupervised street. Advocacy of training girls in moral domesticity was, finally, not limited to the poor. Anglo-Saxon scholars have noted contemporaries’ emphasis on women’s domesticity, and girls’ domestic education, as key to a harmonious and functional society. Nor should one be too cynical about the servant question. Many female philanthropists had sincere faith in family-servant ties as a solution to female poverty and vulnerability; a female servant was supposedly adopted and protected in middle-class families. Finally, Söderlind lists contradictory evidence. The orphanages, in effect, trained girls for work in large institutions, not middle-class homes. The girls, moreover, did more than study and work. The orphanages provided toys, books, gymnastics, and summers in the country, in accordance with bourgeois ideals of childhood recreation and healthy country life. They also gave their graduates continuing assistance, providing many with a temporary home and, in one case, paying a hefty dentist bill. Some girls, moreover, were found or trained for other jobs or remitted to their families; a few were educated as teachers.

This balanced assessment is typical of the study as a whole. Söderlind reminds us to consider the attitudes and actions of the managers, parents, and children involved. Poor urban parents, often recently arrived from the countryside, might prefer to have their girls trained as maids to the bourgeoisie rather than relinquish them to rural foster homes. Orphanage managers shared these prejudices. They suspected rural foster parents of exploiting and abusing their charges; in the case of girls, there were concerns over, and was occasional evidence of, sexual abuse. Söderlind mentions, however, that while orphanage managers noted and condemned this, they ignored the fact that maidservants in urban middle-class families were also exposed to sexual abuse—an example of bourgeois complacency and (Holmesian) antirural prejudice. In short, the orphanages reinforced gender, urban-rural, and class prejudices; they functioned as agents of social control, but they were also the products of conscious and thoughtful choices by professional women, well-to-do donors, poor-relief agents, parents, and even the dependent children themselves.

Respect for the experience and attitudes of contemporaries also characterizes the anthology *Industrious Children: Work and Childhood in the Nordic Countries 1850-1990*. This type of group product forms a third major segment of Scandinavian academic publications. Such anthologies are written by collaborators within foundation-, university-, or state-funded projects, descriptions of which regularly appear in Swedish historical periodicals. Project money often covers publication expenses; the publications are seldom peer reviewed in the American sense. Their scholarly quality depends, rather, on the participating scholars, the amount of funding, and the stringency and ex-
pertise of the funding agency. By no means are all noticed by the historical periodicals.

*Industrious Children* was published by the Work of Nordic Children, 1850-1990, a project financed by the Joint Committee of the Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities, and appeared under the prestigious imprint of Odense University Press. It is a fun book. The seven essays investigate changes in the definition of work and childhood, charting the uneven transition from the ideal of rural and working-class children as unpaid, family-supervised workers to the children’s inclusion, as immature beings, in the bourgeoisie’s “good childhood” of motherly and school-based education.

This process started in the cities, focused on the unsupervised working-class child, and concentrated on empowering schools. Bengt Sandin shows how those who formulated Sweden’s 1881 Ordinance on Child Labor in Industry emphasized schools’ need to socialize urban children “in the desired manner” (p. 42). The result was both the Child Labor Ordinance and an expansion of the state school administration. Sandin asks whether the law against child labor was not, in fact, “a disguise for school legislation” meant to “include all children in the national project of compulsory education” (p. 43). Another attitude informed the treatment of rural children. Here, formal schooling was less urgent; the children’s leisure and work were seen as innocent, healthful, and familial. This was not simply an expression of bourgeois prejudice or a cover-up for powerlessness. Farmers themselves sponsored this view of their children’s work. For many Swedish farmers, as Mats Sjöberg shows, “work was also a school,” the child was a “work being” (p. 123), and anything other than part-time school was unnecessary and pernicious. Sjöberg, like Söderlind, acknowledges economic factors (children might lack strength and skills, but they had time, which made them ideal for herding) but also stresses mentalities. Rural work was seen as healthy and good for morals (although fears of bestiality had produced a 1734 law decreeing that only girls herd).

Reformers focused on the urban child. Yet even here the division between work and education was (as Söderlind argues) not always clear. Girls’ unpaid domestic work remained invisible. But concerns with the socialization of urban boys might lead even teachers to look kindly on their employment. Ellen Schrupmf’s analysis of a 1912 Kristiania school-board inquiry shows that many teachers “stressed that work was good for children. They became accustomed to orderliness, obedience and punctuality. . . . Work kept children off the streets” (p. 61). Paid work might expose urban children (especially girls) to dangers, but it benefited boys’ health and morals.

A preferable solution was, however, to offer working-class children institutionalized work. Pirjo Markkolashow discusses how the state established “children’s workrooms” in turn-of-the-century industrial Tampere because, although school was better than work, supervised and institutionalized work
was better than the loitering and begging inherent in working-class children’s urban leisure. State workrooms provided vocational, moralizing work training.

Most of the anthology contributors are careful, however, to couple state socialization measures with the attitudes of parents and children. Sjöberg describes the view of Swedish farmers, and Ólöf Gardarsdóttir examines the attitudes that lay behind modern Iceland’s practice of giving children seasonal school leave to help with fish processing. Gardarsdóttir, like Sjöberg, cites parental values: “Icelandic parents value hard work more highly in bringing up their children than parents in other European countries” (p. 161) and have a greater fear of children’s idleness. Local authorities collaborated with parents by providing children with summer work schools. The work schools, only recently discontinued, had been popular among the children. The boys especially had derived status from their ability to do hard work and earn wages.

By respecting the views of child workers and parents, the authors seek to advance beyond the categorization of child work as the cruel exploitation of defenseless victims and to treat its abolition as something more (or less) than the relentless march of humanism. Schrumpf’s account of a Norwegian 1875 Central Office of Statistics study confirms the findings of Markkola’s oral histories: both rural and working-class families functioned as work-focused social and cultural units. Family heads shared a preference for parent-supervised work; many urban parents found their children jobs within their own factories. Paid work gave many urban children an independent and proud identity, a sense of being an essential contributor to the family’s well-being.

Girls’ domestic work remained relatively invisible; their paid work, like that of their nonunionized and underpaid mothers, had relatively low status. Boys, however, had more at stake, as vividly illustrated by Ning de Coninck-Smith’s study of turn-of-the-century Copenhagen milk boys. Milk-boy work (argued teachers) harmed the health and exhausted the pupil. Worse, the boys grew up too quickly. Milk boys had money to spend, took pride in their work, connived with employers to circumvent regulations, and even, it seemed, acquired trade-union consciousness. They participated in adults’ strikes, composed their own strikers’ chants and songs, and received strike benefits. Teachers were especially upset when, as sometimes happened, the strikes were taken into the schools. “Under-aged scabs and a boy who had not gone on strike were mobbed, and the milk boys had incited the other pupils to help them upset the milk carts. A few boys used the strike to get an extra day off school” (p. 138). Interviews with former milk boys confirm their independence and pride. “Among the schoolchildren we were tycoons, because we always had some money. The school officers sold gingerbread cakes, and we could buy them every day” (p. 140). The children’s point of view is contrasted to the teachers’ condemnation of their work. City councils and civil servants agreed that while work was preferable to harmful, after-school leisure, it interfered with the purpose of school instruction. Paid urban child work was appropriately regulated
and restricted. There was, predictably, less effort to come to grips with rural child labor, which was unpaid, part of the family, and supposedly playful and healthful; attempts to impose obligatory schooling came into open conflict with ideas of family autonomy and parent-child bonds.

Here, interesting parallels can be drawn with women’s work. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw increasing restrictions on women’s factory labor; but legislators forbore to regulate, or even discuss, the conditions of rural female workers. A farmer had an unquestioned right to the work of his wife and children (and to that of other female and child laborers). It may be that patriarchy, assumed for the countryside, was at bay in the city. There, the state had to substitute for the father, sending the women home and creating institutions that would give working-class children the necessary moral training—a training that was only gradually removed from work. Finally, if slowly, the bourgeois family ideal and school won out; rural and urban childhoods were integrated. The end result, as de Coninck-Smith puts it, was to make “the remaining paid work among children to become illegal and by that invisible” (p. 153).

The triumph of the bourgeois view of childhood was not, however, complete. Anne Solberg’s article on today’s child workers reinforces de Coninck-Smith’s observations both on the pride children can take in work and on their work’s variable visibility. Solberg describes middle-class scholars’ skepticism with regard to her positive reports, in the 1970s, on the status, attitudes, and conditions of boy cod-tongue cutters in Norwegian fishing towns. The work was not onerous, the boys were healthy, and they formed an elite among children. “The cutters themselves obviously enjoyed talking about their work” (p. 187). Girls worked too but in less prestigious fishing work; the work was, unsurprisingly, gendered. But both girls’ and boys’ work was productive and important. Solberg contrasts this to the situation of children in modern child care and in schools, where they are segregated from adults and restricted to activities classified as immature, playful, and nonproductive. Her working children were, instead, integrated into “the central aspects of community life” and allowed access to “activities with a high degree of significance” (p. 190). Solberg reports having observed other child workers. She found child assistants working in flower shops and elsewhere; children sold things door-to-door, delivered papers, and distributed leaflets. And there was, of course, their unpaid domestic work. It took some time before Solberg “saw” this work—something that she finds ironic, “because at the time I would not have hesitated, to categorize housework activities as work when performed by adults” (p. 204). But the Norwegian Central Bureau of Statistics’ study on modern families’ use of time shows that while women spent most time on housework, girls and even boys did much more housework than men did. Children’s domestic work increased, moreover, if the woman was employed outside the home. This Solberg found especially interesting, for the men’s domestic work
did not so increase. Children’s work as a part of a family strategy lives on, and so does children’s ability to find a meaningful identity as workers. Modern women have, in fact, challenged solutions proposed by middle-class males to the woman’s question. It will be interesting to see if children undergo a similar revolution.

This returns us to the metahistory of family strategies and their impact on urban and rural child care, work, and education. The transition in attitudes is, after all, dramatic; equally dramatic are the invisible continuities. Schrumpf ends her study with the life histories of two working-class boys. One, born in 1865, lived as a working child; the workplace, where the child was under the eye of the father, answered for cultural and sociological socialization. The other, born in 1910, had a modern, bourgeois-style childhood dominated by the mother-centered family and the experts’ competitive and individualistic school. The latter, as Holmdahl and Söderlind might emphasize, is the modern, humane condition. Yet, as they would also admit, it is neither normal nor natural. It is at variance with the historical view of child workers as well as the invisible work that children still do. We should be aware of how children’s work reinforces class and gender subordination but also how their work’s place in family or community production may—as rural and working-class parents have maintained—give children independence, status, and pride.

—Madeleine Hurd
Stockholm University College South
MORAL SPACES IN THE BURCKHARDTIAN CITY

RICHARD LONGSTRETH, City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, pp. xxx, 504, illustrations, notes, maps, index, $65.00 cloth.


Nostalgia informs Richard Longstreth’s elegant volumes on the development of commercial architecture in early-twentieth-century Los Angeles, Bruce Radde’s excellent study of the Merritt Parkway, and the ideas of Moshe Safdie. Their nostalgia actually has quite subtle origins in public policy a century ago, in the construction of “the traditional city” in elite planning ideas and the development of an urban sociology. In both fields of thought, moral norms were acknowledged as the product of social practices demarked by “natural areas” or articulated by landscaped boulevards focused on central plazas with monumental public buildings, by parks adorned with public art and suburban greenbelts, and by infrastructure such as electricity, new sewers, water mains for better health and hygiene, and widened streets financed by a rationalized public bonded indebtedness, all intended to accommodate business interests as well.

So the creation of the traditional city also incorporated ideas of controlling the apparent disorder of urban space by the spatial instauration of a moral narrative. “All cities . . . present little more than a slight resemblance of unity with
a considerable degree of chaos,” coolly observed Harland Bartholomew in 1917. This moral narrative transcended particular cities in an idea of “the city.” Early City Beautiful reformers, later nationalist, technocratic city planners like Bartholomew, cosmopolitan designers like the Olmsted brothers, retailers escaping traffic congestion, and suburban real estate developers and financiers all were linked in national associations and in quasi-autonomous planning authorities such as the Merritt Highway and Parkway Commissions. As with suburban housing based on real estate loans, they were taken up in national financial markets, which were themselves a kind of semiotic abstraction that, for example, creatively unbundled ownership rights in suburban retail centers, a legal development that originated with railroad lawyers in the previous century. The key to this complex’s success was not in actually building all that civic landscape but that it escaped the particularity of individual cities and their politics and rendered them translucent to ideas of “the city,” making possible the use of public resources to construct sufficient infrastructure allowing business to elude the transaction costs and social conflicts of high-density environments. Moral and ethical norms still remained in the city-suburb distinction and in a suburban dream of consumption narrated by advertising; they became a kind of performance art.

To use Robert H. Wiebe’s phrase, moral norms were transformed “from essences to actions,” and those actions could be very esoteric indeed. “The traditional city” is or was a fiction—an aesthetic device—working to give ethical content to early-twentieth-century elite trans-urban regimes. But however abstract, the moral framework remains because it was “spatialized” from the start. Greg Hise nicely describes the recent “Los Angeles School” as “the fin-de-siecle bookend to the Chicago sociologists, making a case for the region as an ur-site for post-modern urbanism.” Like ancient bards, though, scholars, cultural critics, journalists, other writers and social activists, and urban designers have been singing variations on this epic from bookend to bookend (to flagrantly mix metaphors) without questioning its inspiration in a profound epistemological and moral skepticism that shaped the Chicago school’s urban ecology long before anything postmodern came along. At least Plato’s Ion could attribute his music to divine inspiration. Still, Longstreth and Safdie, in their different ways, appeal to the moral superiority of their professions and their class, about which Longstreth is explicit with regard to early-twentieth-century architects, planners, and developers. The old Chicago school might very well have been as “post-modern” and ironic as our conventional au courant images of Los Angeles and we just have not recognized it.

Richard Harris and Robert Lewis recently called for a reconsideration of urban geography in the first half of the twentieth century. They have raised theoretical and empirical questions that address the relationship of cities and suburbs, challenging a “received wisdom, which continues to rely heavily on the ideas of the Chicago school of sociology and especially those of Ernest Burgess.” But the “received wisdom” of the Chicago school has its origins in a
philosophically radical conception of a “traditional city” publicly mediated by transatlantic ideas of cultural authority that originated, in Robert Hughes’s words, in the “aim . . . to reform urban chaos by the radical surgery Haussmann had used on Paris, and fill . . . newly cleared boulevards with resplendent new buildings.” The cosmolopolitanism of local elites was expressed by St. Louis realtor and reformer John H. Gundlach, who spoke of creating an “ideal city” that transcended the drabness and disorder of urban industrialism. When the St. Louis Civic League produced its City Plan for St. Louis in 1907, it gestured toward international urbanity and high European culture, to

Paris with its quays tree-lined and extending the full length of the city along each bank of the river Seine; London, with its Victoria Embankment, Budapest with its broad promenades, palatial public buildings and frequent park spaces facing and fringing the Danube.

However, behind the City Beautiful movement was a sensibility straight out of the late-nineteenth-century elite aestheticism derived from Jacob Burckhardt’s influential The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. Instead of Burckhardt’s “state as a work of art,” we have the city as a work of art—but not often recognized is the epistemological and ethical skepticism upon which it was based. Burckhardt offered the Renaissance tyrant, with his will to power and patronizing of a revival of classical art, as the model for maintaining order in a world in which tradition no longer had moral force. American “pragmatic” reformers shared the same epistemological quandary and for the most part approved the aesthetic solution. By the 1920s, though, with zoning and street widening accommodating a “traditional city’s” natural areas, public values were privatized by Beaux Arts–trained modernists in commercial construction, and the skyscraper stood for nothing more than power, as “Mass in Space.” Commercial buildings were “the hieroglyph[s] of capitalism,” and its medium was the technologically articulated city of spatially differentiated land use, power radiating from the center.

The questions raised by Harris and Lewis need a reframing in terms of politics and culture that addresses a convergence of economics, law, technology, and aesthetics since the late nineteenth century. New technologies have been subordinate to capitalist regimes themselves increasingly shaped by a radically skeptical Burckhardtian aesthetic of power. Local, regional, and national elites expressed a kind of avant-garde narrative of capital, an ironic conservatism based upon a continuing legal redefinition of property that has altered the cityscape and its suburbs. There was also a moral narrative imposed on the polycentric city described by Harris and Lewis, and no small part of its irony was a “large scale version of small-town solidarity” that spatially dissolved itself into what Jean B. Quandt, referring to Progressive Era ideas of a “great community,” called a “small-town fetish” in suburban commercial and residential design, concern for “the traditional city” and its neighborhoods, and the
preservation of historic architecture. It linked urban space to consumer style. The moral freight of the narrative has been obscured because it took on, in both finance and popular consumption, the characteristics Walter Benjamin famously attributed to reproducible art.15

To put it another way, the City Beautiful is alive and well, evolving, in the books considered here. They treat the transition of an aesthetics of power from neoclassical, Beaux Arts public buildings into the strip mall and the automotive cityscape of consumption. But they do it from within that aesthetic, which Jane Jacobs described as the “Radiant Garden City Beautiful” imposing a landscaped rhetoric of hierarchy and a simplified redesign for the automobile on an early-twentieth-century cityscape fragmented by divisions of class, ethnicity, race, language, religion, and geography.16 Daniel Burnham’s White City ultimately metamorphosed into the historicizing Country Club Plaza in Kansas City and Westwood Village in Los Angeles, into retail and residential suburban developments almost everywhere down to 1960, and now into “edge cities” and the carefully controlled private-public spaces of the suburban mall.17

More complex is the relationship of architectural preservation—Longstreth’s professional specialty—to elite conservatorship of civic memory. The preservation of buildings deemed of historical or aesthetic value emerged as a national movement in the same period as did City Beautiful urban planning, though its origins were earlier.18 It now extends the public benefits to the “great community” and its metropolitan center of memorializing elite residences—reconciling tension with a “small-town” ideal—to commercial buildings and shopping centers like those Longstreth chronicles, replacing civic memory with nostalgia for personal consumption. The “small-town fetish” of the Progressives has been succeeded by commodity fetishism in suburban enclaves, and the tension between “great community” and “small town” has been erased by the great marketplace.

Longstreth reveals only a little about the prelude to a turn-of-the-century retail exodus from the Los Angeles center, and he does not explain the political and economic regime within which his narrative takes place. But it needs to be repeated that the pattern for regional dispersion in the Los Angeles region was established before the automobile by the petroleum industry and related industrial enterprise. In 1981, Fred W. Viehe demonstrated that the discovery of oil “in the mid-1890s led to the development of a suburban network” that by 1930 surrounded the city of Los Angeles. Viehe—still thinking in terms of the “traditional” model—remarked that “Los Angeles . . . developed a novel metropolitan configuration. Instead of developing an industrial urban core surrounded by residential suburbs, the city developed an administrative residential core surrounded by an industrial suburban network.”19 Also, we have little to give us a feel, at least, of the kind of regime in the Los Angeles region, described by Robert M. Fogelson, that gave such weight to players like Henry E. Huntington—himself a Burckhardtian collector of art—H. G. Whitley, Robert C. Gilles, and others in reinforcing railroad development to further real estate
speculation. Longstreth does not situate his studies within assessment of the interactions of planners, local elites, and government agencies, and this is a genuine missed opportunity. With various municipalities pursuing their own planning activities in the era, the stage was set for several layers of conflicting property interests in the region, in some of which the same cast of characters seems to have pursued contradictory objectives. For example, while Bartholomew’s St. Louis firm was working with the Janns Investment Company in the late 1920s to develop Westwood Village in Los Angeles, he was also collaborating with the Olmsted Brothers on what became the Los Angeles Regional Plan in 1930. But beyond considerations of design, what were the legal innovations involved? How were different aspects of ownership, management, and provision of public services ironed out? How were the public costs financed? Did no one say, “Wait a minute?”

The splendid Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Urban Space in Los Angeles carries a sense of aesthetic technique furthering the Good a step further. Longstreth is acutely sensitive to the economic motive that controls design, and he approaches the development of commercial institutions—the drive-in and the supermarket—by detailing the changing aesthetics of interior and exterior space relationships. In spatial diversity there is technical order possessing cash value. How was the value divvied up? Each of these stores was a Burckhardtian arena for transactions design normatively validated by making access to product brands and styles easy and attractive. But design calculated the costs as well, whether we recognize it or not. Just what else did art negotiate besides making shopping by car convenient? If access to style is a form of consuming art that positively affirms a consumer’s identity by residence, class, and gender, what really structures consumer choice?

Robert Venturi was right when he described the Las Vegas strip as a “complex order.” As an aesthetic order, it derives its moral vocabulary—even its irony—from an earlier era. If we cannot claim divine inspiration for what we enjoy, as consumers we can all be our own versions of Burckhardt’s art-loving Italian despots at the mall. Consumer choice determines the ethical content of urban life, unless you pay heed to Mary Corbin Sies’s problem with reconsidering the conventional wisdom and explore the authenticity of working-class values. Those values differ from and have shaped resistance to middle-class ideas about work, the content of values, and a continuing reorganization of urban space. The question is, What transactions involving the allocation of public resources by private interests are masked by design, and what ethical claims can they make on us legitimately? For Longstreth, this is no problem since he assures us of the benign public intentions of developers and architects (City Center to Regional Mall, 144-8).

In fact, ethical questions might seem just stuffy and irrelevant. The problem still remains that an ethics of aristocratic reaction is the subtext of consumption—as McShane’s and Radde’s happy speeders on the parkways enjoyed elite experience—and regarded as liberation through popular culture from the
hegemony of an elite culture from which it is, in fact, derived. The developers and retailers described by Longstreth sought to popularize elite consumption in suburban shopping centers, but he renders us an image of selfless elite designers and shopping-center builders not concerned with maximizing profit. Despite empirical studies on which Harris and Lewis base their assumption that “it is doubtful whether the city-suburban dichotomy was very significant” in the past, it retains a moral and aesthetic valence derived from the City Beautiful movement and its successors’ object of pursuing “the idea of sorting out certain cultural or public functions and decontaminating their relationship with the workaday city.” All this implies that that the city-suburb distinction counted every bit as much as a moral one, as did the presumably rational calculations of factory owners’ production and location decisions and workers’ “mix of work strategies” and income, in determining—did they really choose as Harris and Lewis’s normatively loaded term says they did?—where they lived. Longstreth’s confidence in his profession and its class and the language of economic choice used by Harris and Lewis both echo the idea of the city as a moral space or collection of moral spaces, and we should engage Sies and explore her qualms with attention to their ethical claims.

The city-as-a-work-of-art has influenced how scholars of “the city” have viewed their subject every bit as much as it has actually structured urban environments in the United States in strikingly uniform ways. Quasi-public policy informed by scholars has probably mediated this exchange, as has the work of urban planners, architects, and art historians. With Harris and Lewis’s path-breaking “new synthesis” in mind, this essay views the seemingly disparate books under review as documents of cultural history themselves and offers—very tentatively, let me stress—a sort of informal, critical coda on their important contribution. I found all of them engaging. But they left me with this conclusion: we ought to look at the evolving spatial structure of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century cities as unfolding from an elite moral and ethical stance that we have not yet adequately grasped.

Of the five volumes considered here, three were written by art historians, and one by a postmodern Canadian architect in collaboration with another who has studied his work. Only Clay McShane’s Down the Asphalt Path—now a well-established workhorse text in the field and an indispensable resource—broaches questions of technological succession that imply perhaps greater continuity from the nineteenth century in the development of urban geography than conventional wisdom would lead us to suspect. McShane hints at the aesthetic origins of the orthodox vision of the North American city in urban regimes increasingly transparent to capital. In that vein, his treatment of the rise of the automobile as a form of male consumption, as a democratization of elite consumption, is noteworthy. The development of the landscaped urban parkway from a venue for elite carriage promenading and racing into an integral part of urban design for the automobile is an important part of McShane’s story and the prelude to Radde’s. It directly translated an elite City Beautiful
aesthetic into an adaptation of transportation technology inseparable from public policy, from what one St. Louis historian has described as the City Beautiful’s effort to develop “a simplified, hierarchical sense of space in the contemporary city . . . [as] one aspect of its rhetorical presentation to the public.”

The automobile transformed the nature of that early, comprehensive and monumental urban planning in other ways. Autos made urban planners into bureaucrats concerned with the esoterica of land use issues and traffic engineering. That solved the problem of establishing a hierarchical and organic civic order by centering and transferring its role to private developers who operated within a national network of architects, real estate associations, regional planning authorities, special-purpose districts, and lending institutions over which local governments had less and less leverage. McShane writes that “municipalities continued traditional, ad hoc city planning presided over by city engineers, who sought to plan new territory around cars, and to retrofit downtown to the new technology through repaving, street widening, and bridge construction programs.” He concludes, “Both responses assumed the possibility of reconciling traditional cities with the automobile” (p. 202). At the risk of too much repetition—though I want to drive the point home—I am not sure what “the traditional city” was besides a fiction.

In fact, I am not sure that I have all that good a purchase on what the nineteenth-century cityscape might have been like. (I suspect it bewildered many of the people who lived in it.) The city I know best, St. Louis, Missouri, seems to have been a chaotic and physically churning built environment. It was “notorious for its inadequate infrastructure.” A scholarly architectural survey of St. Louis concludes that four aesthetically distinct central cities occupied a site that experienced almost constant rebuilding. Before the Civil War, a suburban elite subdivision was built around a park developed on the highest elevation of the old village commons. Working-class residential enclaves formed around industrial sites well to the north and south of the town along the Mississippi River during the same era. Despite their social, political, and physical instability, they are now integrated historically, as part of a devolved City Beautiful aesthetic, as examples of a sort of neighborhood heritage ecology by local architectural preservationists, and moral discourse has been particularized into nostalgia for “neighborhoods” that were abandoned en masse by their original ethnic populations after 1900. At the turn of the twentieth century, in part to escape riverfront congestion, industry began locating at places that offered unobstructed railroad access on the urban periphery, and workers’ housing—often without adequate sanitation, usually with streetcar access—together with retail centers grew up around them. As did Los Angeles’s, St. Louis’s spatial extension followed patterns established by fixed-rail transportation technology serving, even in that midwestern city, at least two major extraction industries—rock quarrying and clay mining—whose impact along one linear corridor anticipated that of petroleum’s in Los Angeles in creating a template for metropolitan growth. Two affluent suburban municipalities,
Webster Groves and Kirkwood, incorporated on it west of the city before the turn of the twentieth century.35

In St. Louis, the early planners’ goal was to integrate a low-density patchwork of “fenced off corners” into a coherent urban scheme focused on the center, which is to say, impose “the traditional city” aesthetic on a fragmented built environment.36 The in-fill actually was not accomplished along landscaped parkways connecting the city’s parks and neighborhoods. As landscape architect George Kessler put it, to the city’s “great melting pots” its major parks were “almost unknown countries.” Even streetcar fares were “a financial problem with many.”37 Regarded as elitist, in the 1910s a parkway idea was stubbornly fought in battles that heightened class and racial antagonisms leading to the dissolution of the first St. Louis City Plan Commission and to passage of a segregation ordinance by referendum in 1916 made possible under a new reform city charter intended to implement ideas of democratic community embodied in City Beautiful design. The city was articulated not by monumental boulevards but by overcapitalized electric streetcar lines followed by real estate speculation and subject to regular labor crises, rider protests, and boom and bust. The story is familiar to McShane. Since the early twentieth century, St. Louis growth patterns have been determined—and this includes the development of major radial streets by Harland Bartholomew in the 1920s and 1930s and postwar interstate highway routes—by steel rails.38

Like the downtown Los Angeles retailers trying to escape central business district congestion described by Longstreth, between 1895 and about 1920 large St. Louis wholesalers moved away from downtown and the Mississippi riverfront by building a technologically advanced warehouse complex to the west, at the mouth of a tunnel debouching into the city’s railroad yards. The complex solved the problem of freight transfer by cartage from the river through downtown, but it also was a major step in abandonment of the old city center. The subversion of the city center and a public aesthetic of hierarchy began with an “old” technology of concentration that assimilated a historicizing style—its designers were not commercial architects but Beaux Arts designers of elite residential homes.39 Every basic element of the Los Angeles commercial boulevard was anticipated by shippers and manufacturers late in the pre-automobile era of rail. Without that context, Longstreth’s valuable work becomes a highly sophisticated form of antiquarianism. Los Angeles was not an ur-postmodern city or in any way exceptional. If anything, a drab city of immigrants whose elites put on elaborate spectacles of civic art such as the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the Pageant and Masque of 1914—the most elaborate historical pageant ever staged in the United States—that bore no relationship to the disorderly, smoky, smelly, multilingual, and near-formless city St. Louis was, just might be.40

Such local extravaganzas as the St. Louisans put on were related to a new rhetoric of hierarchy that linked morality to infrastructure, urban space to personality, in the ideas of urban reformers generally and in the classic
formulations of the Chicago school and its concentric, “natural” urban areas, in contrast to a loosely articulated cityscape that could be focused on common civic good.\(^{41}\) The idea of “communities” as we know the word today is an artifact of Progressive Era notions of shared citizenship and land use districts that were imposed from above and by the 1920s were evolving into the notion of access to spatially differentiated consumption and public services. Implicit in the idea of a “social construction of communities [emphasis added]” anyway is the idea that they are not so natural after all.\(^{42}\) It instead suggests that the valorization of urban space by City Beautiful reformers in monumental neoclassical and Beaux Arts buildings, in the sociology of Robert E. Park and Burgess, and in the somewhat later emergence of a bureaucratic “City Efficient” planning pioneered by Harland Bartholomew in St. Louis, rested on pretty shaky, in fact skeptical foundations and was easily transferred to “nonpolitical” action that came out of negotiation with weak or politically conflicted local governments and among elite interest groups. What really provided the leverage for building early-twentieth-century infrastructure were regional and national financial intermediaries that supplied the capital to achieve the specific goals of developers.

The suburban dream associated with middle-class values portrayed by McShane in *Down the Asphalt Path,* and attributed to the homogeneous Midwesterners who populated Los Angeles suburbs and patronized the department stores, supermarkets, and shopping centers described by Longstreth, was a product of the old, marmoreal, and supposedly stuffy and historicizing elite Beaux Arts City Beautiful and its “search for order” with the transformation of American finance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^{43}\) It has played itself out into the idea of an urban space or spaces characterized by “imaginaries,” very loosely defined as “literary productions, notions of urban myth, memory and nostalgia in the city and its environs, or . . . the sociological imagination re-cast within the changing realm of new technologies and forms of communication.” Increasingly spatialized imaginings associate nostalgia, community diversity, and consumption in public history. But they also render public debate over moral ends (Whose city is it? What kind of city should it be?) almost impossible, conflating past and present in administered consumption.\(^{44}\) The city remains a work of art and ethical discourse; has it simply followed the decentering of urban space by capital and with a restricted public vocabulary? The books considered here all suggest yes, and they also imply that this smoothing out of moral discourse was unopposed.

A decentering, “bureaucratization of space”—and, alas, Harris and Lewis’s “new synthesis” raises questions about it—has been summarized by Edward W. Soja:

> What began in the early part of [the twentieth century] was accelerated in response to the Great Depression and the Second World War. . . . As a result of another kind of restructuring, finance capital became still more significant in
shaping urban space, in conjunction not only with industrial capital but increasingly in conjunction with the other key agency of regulation and spatial restructuring, the state. This coalition of capital and the state worked effectively to replan the city as a consumption machine, transforming luxuries into necessities, as massive suburbanization created expanded markets for consumer durables...and [caused] the occupational segmentation of the working class."

The stories told by McShane, Longstreth, and Radde—in different ways—fit into this postmodern metanarrative, too. And it also can accommodate the rather Panglossian view of the development of suburban Los Angeles by Greg Hise’s *Magnetic Los Angeles*—which ought to be read with Longstreth’s books—that planning in the region emerged from the real estate industry.46

There are two ways to approach this metanarrative of an urban aesthetic and its serial chapters. The first is to point out that it still asserts its ethical primacy, whether in Sies’s autonomous working-class, middle-class, and black exurbs or in the actions of real estate developers in Los Angeles, and it persists in contemporary sprawl and in New Urbanist enclaves. Now, however, capital is the Good in its own right, consumption represents its moral plenitude, and nostalgia supplies the iconography. In Longstreth, for example, space remains valorized in a transmogrification of the City Beautiful idea of the democratic urban citizen into that of the contented consumer. Public moral authority is transferred to the operations of socially conscious real estate developers. A benevolent paternalism offered a “Guaranteed Neighborhood” and access to stuff beginning in the 1920s. The suburban shopping center and adjacent subdivisions, argues Longstreth, did not emerge from a “drive to achieve maximum profits...but rather from reform efforts” to provide residential development “using a holistic approach to create places as communities in their own right” (p. 144). In neighborhoods such as Riverside and Roland Park, “commerce could operate in an environment consonant with genteel domesticity” (p. 148).

Reading this, even the work of a conservative, openly elitist philosopher like Hadley Arkes, whose *Philosopher in the City: The Moral Dimensions of Urban Politics*, argues for the city “in the more classic sense, as a center for moral instruction,” and who attacks the diversity of contemporary urban imaginings, begins to look persuasive.47 Arkes and Moshe Safdie—for whom the city center is the aesthetic focus—might have more in common than either could imagine.

The second approach is to question just how smooth a story it was or is. One student of the era’s intellectual history has argued that the “language of autonomous working-class self-activity sounded weakly against [the] demands for citizenship and responsibility” that accompanied genteel efforts to morally allocate space with marble and concrete or with asphalt and suburban bungalows and yards and all those shopping centers, supermarkets, and drive-ins.48 It also sounds weakly in the books considered here. T. J. Jackson Lears shows how an elite cultural reaction emerging from nineteenth-century secularization contributed to the rise of consumerism and ideas of therapeutic adjustment...
to a world in which moral discourse had no firm ground. Before World War I, this was pretty much a bourgeois malady. We know that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw episodes of labor protest—often violently repressed by local, state, and federal elites. Perceptions of urban disorder contributed to the shaping of beliefs and images about the disorder arising from urban masses and to the construction of narratives of order itself. Working-class resistance to the intrusions of new transportation technologies and the arrangement of space in “networked cities” shaped by an elaborating infrastructure approximating the “traditional” ecology, all made possible by more fluid capital, was loud, disruptive, and widespread. Opposition to the introduction of railroads, electric streetcars, and even the automobile’s voracious consumption of urban space is a motif interwoven with Soja’s seamless narrative of capital, spatially displaced and less visible but alive and well into the 1960s.

In St. Louis—once again—efforts at City Beautiful planning encountered such vociferous resistance to the “networking” of the cityscape that the city’s elite and middle-class reformers staged remarkably elaborate parades and civic spectacles. They constructed a romantic vision—an urban imagining—of a past built around gallant frontier Frenchmen and the ghost of a medieval French king to promote political cohesion and forestall class and, in the case of the parkway scheme during the mid-teens that threatened to displace 16,000 blacks, racial violence. Intra-elite, intra-regime conflicts over local development policy in most cities—and Radde’s well-told story of the battles that accompanied the creation of the Merritt Parkway is the only one in the books considered here to show any sense of the nature of those regimes—were and still are at David Harvey’s “knife-edge” of capital and are part of how the system worked. Radde’s saga of political conflict and corruption really reflects the struggles that accompanied the extension of the old City Beautiful’s escape from the contamination of the ordinary city into trans-urban space. The moral order of the Burckhardtian City was seriously challenged before its “spatialization” in whichever model city you pick and largely because the same processes of technological succession and polycentric formation of things like suburban industry and working-class housing displaced a lot of people and threatened others, as the parkway proposal pitted St. Louis whites against blacks in the mid-teens, for example. It required legitimation and got it largely because federal policy pursued the old Progressive totems of citizenship and homeownership in the suburbs after the Second World War, with maintaining social order a major goal. The contrast between “the traditional city” and that of Harris and Lewis is an artifact of the disjunction between moral discourse and moral practice.

Reading Moshie Safdie reinforced my identification with early-twentieth-century St. Louis rioters who vandalized electric streetcar lines. He refreshed my sympathy for the city’s ethnic street gangs, its fractious German socialists, exiled Mexican revolutionaries, black blues musicians and preachers and folk
healers, and unionists who would strike in a heartbeat. The City after the Automobile made me yearn for the days of alienated rich kids like William Burroughs and his polymorphously perverse acquaintances in the seedier parts of town and of literary arbiters and civic boosters like William Marion Reedy, who married a brothel madam. It restored my devotion to the Ozark immigrants—the legendary St. Louis “hoosiers”—who, rejecting the discipline of modernity, brought Deliverance to its slums, and to the canny, beer-swilling, cigar-chewing neighborhood politicians who never met a downtown businessman or good government type they did not despise, to a whole cast of other characters crowded together in a smoky, malodorous, chaotic environment who seem as if they belong in some Latin American magical-realist novel. If Hadley Arkes’s city as a center of moral instruction still retains the old paternalistic City Beautiful ethos, Safdie offers us Cities Beautiful strung out like clichéd pearls. “The city after the automobile,” he tells us, “is a broad network of dispersed, low-rise residential neighborhoods mixed with open land reserves—and, in contrast, bold on the skyline, a number of dense, intensive districts replete with culture” (p. 151). This is the Burckhardtian City of early-twentieth-century reformers and planners, including Safdie’s substitution for cars of electric rail links between his Cities Beautiful, and almost all its elements can be found in embryo in the Olmsted-Bartholomew regional plan for Los Angeles.55 Indeed, it reminded me of Wilshire Boulevard with electric streetcars—which, if they existed, would never have been built (and mass transit in the Los Angeles basin was crippled by automobile interests anyhow) since its design elements were related to escaping downtown retail congestion, a succession of problems related to traffic congestion along a series of retail nodes, and the creation of environments that—at their base—were intended to associate consumption with reference to imagined, standardized traditional or de rigueur Modernist forms accommodating happy shoppers and their cars. In other words, Safdie makes no sense, and his idea of a new city form is old-fashioned not only in content but also in its holistic paternalism.

Safdie’s most curious idea is that of electric “utility cars,” vehicles to be rented for temporary use, which appears to be a humanizing concession to the inevitability of cityscapes shaped by the internal combustion engine. As a flexible, short-term-use and short-trip alternative, utility cars may actually relieve the inconvenience of more affluent urbanites—it would require a sophisticated network of credit—not disposed to mass transit or taxis in high-density environments. The utility-car idea is spreading in both North America and Europe.56 Convenience and disposability—consumerism’s benchmarks, with the disposable now our equivalent of the irony of elite high culture in the past—have become the way to avoid any sense of civic purpose in a city that is “after” the automobile only in the architect’s imagination.

Safdie is still trying to figure out a way to make things convenient along his equivalent of the congestion-plagued Wilshire or Santa Monica corridors. But here is another approach, one that attacks the Burckhardtian City and rejects
the association of art with ethics on which it is based. Reflecting on the titles considered in this essay, I remembered one bright and sunny May Day morning in the early 1980s when I had driven the entire length of Wilshire—a street named for a socialist real estate speculator whom Lenin credited with inspiring his theory of imperialism. The drive took me past what remains of the commercial streetscape Longstreth studies, and I had actually stopped briefly at Westwood Village, to which I went regularly almost as a pilgrimage—ironically, it has been saved from economic decline by a preservationist community group that shared the nostalgia of these texts, as did I, and if the truth be told, I still do. The drive—both fascinating and appalling—always turned up something new that I had missed before. The boulevard has a coherence sustained by reflection on its Venturian “complex order.” For me, it was also an archaeology of complexity; it was historicizing reflection; in effect I “despatialized” Wilshire, and that is why I read Longstreth’s books with such appreciative enthusiasm and critical engagement. I admire them greatly still.

But back then, after parking my car, I walked to where I was headed, the Farmers’ Market on Broadway—right about where Longstreth’s narrative of the outward march of retailers began—straight into another scene that carried its own nostalgic freight: people were pressed up against collapsing plate-glass windows; the street echoed with screams of fright and pain and revolutionary chants, too; other small groups were fleeing down Broadway, some still waving red banners, with mounted police charging into them swinging riot sticks like Cossacks’ sabers. There were drifting eye- and nose-biting clouds of tear gas. Now, I also spent a great deal of time in the socially and economically very different areas of east and south-central Los Angeles, in Compton, Watts, Huntington Park (named for the great Burckhardtian magnate), places where people lived and worked who had not benefited from the benevolent projects of Longstreth’s designers and developers. So—thinking of that enchanting cityscape out west—I thought then, and reading these books think now, Why not out there, where it ought to be? And the moral order of the city, something we assume is the result of large-scale, rational processes that “spatialize” the ethical and so disguise it—however we revise its geography—could not have been more clear to me, then and now.

The beleaguered May Day marchers’ politics were not mine. Mine superficially resemble those of Hadley Arkes, but my equally classicizing notions of the city as an arena for moral instruction would horrify him. Rather, I have faith in an idea of the city as a space for what the ancient Greeks called parrhesia, free, candid speech for which the speaker also takes moral responsibility, as opposed to the disposable ironies of consumption.57 A citizen is someone who participates in debating the common good of the city, who metechei tes poleos, is involved in the public and moral contentiousness of the polis rather than living and shopping in differentiated urban spaces created by others; one cannot be an ethical flaneur.58 I like the old nineteenth-century St. Louis neighborhood
politicians’ appeals to a common civic good while they fought each other and what they saw as a “Big Cinch” of elite downtown business interests tooth and nail.59 With that quaint notion of citizenship in mind, I picked up a chunk of asphalt, hurled it at a cop as he galloped by, and joined the rioters. For the rest of the morning, that scene on Broadway was my Los Angeles. I had just left another, very different one. But I also “despatialized” my own urban ethics and was thinking of my obstreporous, often insurrectionary St. Louis citizens, who had fought the construction of “the traditional city” far away in distance and time. Saying no to the Burckhardtian City, I thought over and over, with every taunt I yelled at the cops, every rock or bottle I threw: Why not out there?

—William H. Leckie, Jr.  
St. Louis, Missouri

NOTES

1. Donald M. Lowe, History of Bourgeois Perception (Chicago, 1982), 40-3, associates nostalgia with “the despatialization of historiography” and “traditionalism as the consciousness of a tradition that was no longer binding” and supplies the theoretical framework for regarding the books reviewed as artifacts of nostalgia, though I work assuming a tension between formal and changing notions of time and space that continues today.


3. Harland Bartholomew, Problems of St. Louis (St. Louis, 1917), 65.

4. The best recent, synoptic treatment of this national skein of relationships among professions and its intellectual, social, and political context is Oliver Zunz, Why the American Century (Chicago, 1999).


26. Eric Todd Sandweiss, “Construction and Community in South St. Louis, 1850-1910” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1991), 224-7, anachronistically interprets the goal of zoning in St. Louis as attempting to preserve the city’s “natural” structure when it actually was imposing it and contradicting a planner’s interpretation of cities—such as the unintegrated cityscape of St. Louis and its “fenced off corners”—as unnatural growths; see Bartholomew, *Problems of St. Louis*, xv.


32. Lawrence Lowic, The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis: From the Louisiana Purchase to the Wainwright Building 1803-1891 (St. Louis, MO, 1982).


36. Sandweiss, “Fenced Off Corners and Wider Settings,” in Planning the Twentieth Century American City, Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver, eds. (Baltimore, 1996), 76-97; Sandweiss, “Construction and Community.”


38. Elizabeth Noble Schmidt, “Civic Pride and Prejudice: St. Louis Progressive Reform, 1900-1916” (master’s thesis, University of Missouri, St. Louis, 1989), treats the racial conflict generated by the parkway proposal and details the speculative construction that accompanied streetcar consolidation. McShane on Milwaukee street railways anticipated Schmidt on the role of financial speculation; see McShane, Technology and Reform: Street Railways and the Growth of Milwaukee, 1887-1900 (Madison, WI, 1974), 20-1. The harsh treatment of McShane’s judgment in this journal by Glen E. Holt, “The Main Line and Side Tracks: Urban Transportation History,” Journal of Urban History 5 (1979): 397-9, was couched in the language of price-equilibrium theory, a central but empirically shaky tenet of classical economics that—as moral discourse—transfers responsibility for inflated expectations to a neutral and rational aggregate of investors.


41. Robert Ezra Park, “The Urban Community as a Spatial Pattern and a Moral Order,” in Human Communities: The City and Ecology (Glencoe, IL, 1952), 165-77.


43. Wiebe, Search for Order, 11-43, explicitly associates the rise of a national economy with the rise of a bureaucratic but localist middle-class mentality.

44. Sallie Westwood and John Williams, eds., Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory (London and New York, 1997), 1. The same changes have caught up with the portrayal of history in museums, which now emphasize “meaning” and “imaginings” and downplay the role of scholarship in public history; see Robert R. Archibald, A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community (Walnut Creek, CA, 1999). On merchandising and museums see Neil Harris, Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America (Chicago, 1990), 56-81.


46. Hise, Magnetic Los Angeles.


55. Safdie’s urban imagining is in the same vein as that of Kevin Lynch, who revised the City Beautiful aesthetic as the concept of “legibility,” as a “corresponding image” for “a new functional unit” emerging with suburbanization. See Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), 1-13.


CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE SOCIAL


In Science, Class and Society, Göran Therborn argued that the consolidation of bourgeois society in nineteenth-century Europe entailed swapping revolution for reform, history for sociology. Having wrested political legitimacy from the aristocracy, the middle classes were loath to share it with the proletariat. History had proved a useful way of making sense of the revolutionary moment when power passed into bourgeois hands. Sociology provided a functionalist account of a society in which each group played its distinctive part and there no longer remained any need for fundamental change. The arguments of these three books may be accommodated with ease within Therborn’s general account. In The Contest for Social Science, Eileen Yeo proposes that in the transition from the action-oriented social science of revolutionary times (1789-1850) to the professionalizing sociology of reformist times (1890-1920), the earlier focus on warring social classes was replaced by an emphasis on interdependent social groups. Lynn Lees argues, in The Solidarities of Strangers, that the Poor Laws of the period 1860-1948 saw an attempt to move beyond “residualism” to a new social contract in which the poor were brought in from the margins of society to a central position where they could be reformed into adopting bourgeois manners. Christopher Hamlin’s Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick demonstrates that this attack on the habits of the poor was heir to a more general attempt to finesse economic in-
equality through cultural and environmental critique. The poor, he argues, were seen as filthy and vicious rather than as desperate and ill fed.

In each case, a new conception of the social corresponds to the new reformist times. For Hamlin, the revolutionary claims of the Chartists were devalued as the home rather than the workplace, as miasma rather than destitution, and as places rather than persons came to define the condition of England question. Indeed, revolutionary ideas were perfectly explicable as the product of the gases of organic decomposition that weakened the intellect and excited the passions. The social, then, described the proper arena for state activity. Edwin Chadwick placed the male proletarians at the heart of this new conception of the social. It comprised adult mortality since this bore directly on economic capacity and efficiency. At mid-century, the health of mothers and children was less obviously a public matter. Furthermore, diet and working conditions were taken as given, as beyond the ambit of state regulation. Working-class men were to be moralized, but first they must be rendered less vicious. Only a cleaner environment could sensitize such brutes to the finer considerations that should guide their behavior. Beyond this, the ecological connections between different parts of the city should bring rich and poor into a common urban alliance in pursuit of a better urban environment. Chadwick, then, uncoupled health from poverty and hitched it to the sanitary wagon bearing road making, street sweeping, water supply, garbage removal, and sewerage. Hamlin shows, in an account as elegant as it is persuasive, that Chadwick constructed the social out of morals, pipes, and soap, relegating wages and working conditions to the unalterable realm of nature. This new social world was clearly an urban one. The new public health policies were offered as purely technical fixes to revolutionary challenges.

A similar dialectic of revolution and social reform is presented by Lees. Here, however, the revolutionary challenge is provided not by Chartists but by escalating rates. In the wake of the Napoleonic wars, the poor rolls lengthened and many parishes came to redefine pauperism to moderate the demands placed on them. The central concept in this study is residualism. This is an approach to welfare that sees public support as granted to a marginal group of people who cannot work. Under the Old Poor Laws of the eighteenth century, individuals unable to find employment could be set to work as paupers on tasks, such as building roads, that served the whole community, or they could be offered a wage supplement that made it possible for local employers to take them into field or factory. Those who would not work were to be punished as vagrants. Lees offers an excellent analysis of how the social was constructed under this Old Poor Law system. Rights to poor relief were decided by local communities. Here, in the parish, committees of rate payers, sitting as guardians, decided who did and who did not merit support from the rates, decided who did and who did not qualify for the rights of citizenship. In the late seventeenth century, perhaps 10 to 15 percent of English people received the dole in
any one year, and in bad years perhaps 20 to 25 percent did so. These decisions were made under the rubric of settlement. Parishes had extensive rights to prevent the dependent poor from ever acquiring settlement. This construction of the social, however, also marginalized the pauper, for with relief from dire need came expulsion from the political community. Paupers lost voting rights: no person could both receive and decide on welfare payments.

In the period 1790-1820, the parishes witnessed unprecedented demands on the poor rate. The attack on common rights in the countryside together with the dislocation attendant on the wars with revolutionary France produced a welfare crisis across rural southern England. Now, the weekly dole came under attack. New, and less attractive, ways of delivering welfare were devised to diminish demand. Now the poor were offered no more than moral reform through institutionalization. This new system was codified as the New Poor Law from 1834 and was exported from the agricultural South to the more resistant industrial North. There was a new construction of the social under way. Despite the Act of Union of 1800, many parishes tried to exclude the Irish from the welfare system. Lees shows that the harsher use of the workhouse to deter requests for support was pioneered first on the Irish living in English cities before being extended to Englishmen as well. While the rhetoric of the new system laid emphasis on the need to stiffen the independence of the able-bodied through the threat of the workhouse, the main groups aided were in fact the sick and the elderly. In practice, many parishes continued to offer meager weekly doles to the elderly but not with any expectation that this gave them any chance of independence. Instead, the elderly were expected to call on kin and neighbours if they wished to try surviving outside the workhouse.

This new regime was explicitly gendered. The poverty of men was understood in terms of its effects on the labor market. Men’s refusing work when employment was available would raise artificially the wages of the willing laborers. The injunction to work was laid with particular severity upon fathers. In contrast, the danger of female poverty was seen in moral terms as both cause and consequence of unregulated sexuality. Women without work were seen as deserving of aid if they were bereft of their men (widows, the wives of soldiers, deserted wives), without regard for what effect this might have on wages and work locally. The New Poor Law constructed society around a patriarchal, nuclear family.

In parliament, the urban question was largely defined in terms of public health and the poor laws. Just as with the public health movement of mid-century, the New Poor Law treated the economy as sacrosanct: the poor laws were to serve its efficient operation. The social at best laid the basis for a capitalist industrial economy. The principal institutions and arrangements of that economy were not socialized. The economy lay outside the social in the order of nature. To some extent, though, the New Poor Law did its work too well. The working classes accepted the proposition that pauperism entailed a loss of re-
spectability. They also accepted, to some degree, that the economy followed autonomous natural laws. Once unemployment was seen as the inevitable fallout of natural economic cycles, then the punitive dimension of the pauperism was seen as quite inappropriate. Breadwinning males left high and dry by structural shifts in the economy or by rhythms beyond human control saw no reason why they should on that account be cast out of the body politic. The social was redefined again in the late nineteenth century so that it might retain the unemployed, if not the vagrant, within the scope of full citizenship. This new set of welfare rights defined a more generous conception of citizenship and was enshrined in the welfare reforms that followed the Second World War. Lees concludes by noting that while in principle this universalism was institutionalized after 1945, persistent underfunding devalued formal rights so that by the 1980s lower taxes were seen as an irrepressible trend requiring new forms of means testing to cut the welfare suit to fit the fiscal cloth. New forms of moralizing residualism are currently dividing the deserving from the undeserving poor in places from Hackney to Texas.

From these practical concerns with poor law and public health, it is no distance at all to the activities of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (founded in 1857). Yeo shows that social science was explicitly concerned with the contestable constructions and reconstructions of the social order practiced through public health and poor law. This is a magnificent monograph cramming so many dimensions of the social question between its covers that it defies summary treatment. The central argument is that social science was intended to serve a progressive agenda during its heyday, the age of revolutions (1789-1850). In terms of Thernborn’s argument, Yeo documents a struggle between social and natural accounts of society that predates the age of reform. Social science had to compete with the sciences of political economy and government in order to claim a distinct object of study. Its competitors treated politics and the economy as the only important dimensions of public life and, furthermore, treated them as realms in which deliberate design or human intervention had to bow down before material and psychological necessity. Social science had its roots in resistance. Socialism and feminism shaped social science through their distinctive criticisms of political economy.

Political economy taught that the economy was best served by unfettered competition between individual entrepreneurs. The captains of industry atop the social pyramid had the knowledge and the right to direct investment wherever they could see prospects of profit. Out of such profit-seeking behavior, social wealth and human welfare would be maximized. Socialists reversed many of the claims of political economy. Science should be concerned as much with distribution as with the production of wealth. Communalism, not individualism, brought out the best and the most from people. Cooperation, not competition, advanced efficiency. Labor was the truly productive class, while managers and owners of capital batten upon this wealth. These ideas elevated the
self-respect of workers. These ideas were built into general theories of society that challenged the legitimacy of bourgeois political economy.

Political economy was based on a gendered division between the public world of wealth production and the private world of family and morality. The problem was that the ills of the town and the threat of social anarchy could hardly be blamed on the market economy if that economic order were seen as inevitable and natural. Consequently, social evils were blamed on moral failings. This created an opening for feminine qualities in social reform. If political economy represented male analytical values, social reform required feminine intuition if the hearts of the poor were to be reached. Middle- and upper-class women showed the poor compassion through service and in doing so became experts on the family life of the poor. Indeed, these evangelical charity workers considered that they knew better than the poor themselves how best to manage family life in the slum. Nevertheless, this feminine philanthropy also created openings for working-class women to become involved in a life of service as teachers and nurses.

Yeo gives an enthralling account of the force and ambivalence of this progressive social science. While advocating gender equality in theory, in practice male socialists did little to address their own patriarchy. With significant exceptions such as Josephine Butler, philanthropic women failed to examine their own patronizing attitudes toward the poor. The book also shows how this social science was tamed. First, middle-class male reformers took social science away from theory toward facts. Leaving theory to political economy, they accumulated details of working-class urban life to show the poor’s dire need of moral reform. Outside the pages of Mayhew’s earliest journalism, the poor were allowed but rarely to speak for themselves. Instead, their behavior was measured against middle-class norms of respectability. Its unacceptability made the case for religion and education.

In the second place, social science was recruited as intellectual capital to boost the status of middle-class professionals. In contrast to an aristocratic society in which inheritance ruled, competence, as evidenced by qualifications, would now confer status. Universities became involved in conferring qualifications. Working-class women now lacked the credentials to do nursing and teaching and were soon replaced by middle-class women. The sociologist now emerged as the professional who understood how society functioned and who could direct the poor toward a correct understanding of the moral order of mass society. The antagonism of social science toward political economy evaporated in the evolutionary sun of organic social metaphors. Autonomous working-class institutions of knowledge were either co-opted or driven out of business. The Age of Reform had been consolidated.

These three books make major contributions to our understanding of the relations between social reform, social science, and society in nineteenth-century Britain. Yeo works with ideas of revolution and reform familiar in many histories of social science such as those of Therborn and Geoffrey
Hawthorn. These two works, however, relate ideas to society at a very high level of generalization, and Yeo is surely right to emphasize the way that social science engaged with quite specific social questions. In this approach, Yeo echoes the work of Philip Abrams, which presented social reformers as practical social scientists. Abrams, however, had much less to say about the complexities of bourgeois ideologies as they were inflected by religious and economic conflicts. A more satisfactory marriage of political history with the history of social thought was provided by Philip Corrigan in a brilliant Ph.D. thesis and, subsequently, in collaboration with Derek Sayer, in a masterly overview of the development of the moral reform strategies and class-building efforts of the British state. But Yeo’s emphasis on the links between social science and Owenite socialism, as well as her emphasis on the contestable gender politics of “moral” reform, goes much further than Corrigan did, beyond the limits of the world of the bourgeois male, restoring to other more marginalized groups—socialists and women—a key role in shaping social science.

Hamlin likewise makes a distinctive contribution to existing studies. Public health history has long relied on excellent studies of key bureaucrats. Michael Flinn very usefully drew attention to William Pulteney Alison, a Scots public health and poor-law reformer who seems to have taught at Edinburgh a large proportion of the British public health community and who rejected Chadwick’s environmentalism in favor of a more economic emphasis on working conditions and poverty. The lengths Chadwick went to in his attempts to marginalize and undermine Alison’s arguments were taken by Flinn as clear evidence of the importance of the distinction between economic and environmentalist accounts of disease. The ways that debates about poverty relate to those concerning public health have been further refined as a result of Boyd Hilton’s excellent studies of the religious dimensions of debates in political economy. Our understanding of the relations between the science of medicine and the social context of science has certainly been advanced by recent studies in the sociology of science that direct our attention to what scientists do rather than what they claim to be doing. These studies inform the innovative approach Hamlin takes to public health as a bourgeois ideology, but Hamlin, like Yeo, goes outside the bourgeoisie for some of his most exciting insights. From Edward Thompson, he takes a commitment to questioning whether the bourgeois attention to the lives of the poor served to improve their lives in any meaningful way. Thompson, as Hamlin reminds us, argued that the hand-loom weavers starved even as they were being intensively studied by select committees and investigative journalists. This directs Hamlin to the provocative thesis that the public health question was a diversion. It treated environmental questions and ignored economic ones, hiding class in a miasma.

In some ways, the most impressive feature of Lees’s book is its chronological sweep. Monographs reporting fresh empirical findings usually shy of offering any interpretation of very long-term change. The methodological principles guiding the study and the way it relates to existing interpretations of
welfare systems are well explained in a brief introduction. The diversity of welfare regimes both over time and from place to place undermines any attempt to establish simple correlations between welfare and either modernization or capitalism. As have others, Lees stresses the importance of institutions in the management of uncertainty. Lees further accepts that the poor laws were shaped by many concerns but that the management of the labor market was one of its primary considerations. But more than one social group had an interest in the regulation of the labor market and, with Peter Mandler, Lees draws attention to the coalition that secured the passing of the reform of 1834. Again, though, the distinction of Lees’s approach lies in the ways the study moves outside the life world of the bourgeoisie to explore how subaltern groups, the poor and women, were active agents in the negotiation of poor-law policies in practice and thus also in theory. Working-class agency is not confined to the looming threat of revolution impelling a reluctant middle class to offer welfare concessions. Rather, the working class relied on the poor law and made calculated use of welfare systems at various times in the economic cycle and in its own life cycle. These expectations soon become customary, and they were defended with vehemence and employed with skill.

In different ways, then, these three books are testimony to the need to examine the interrelations between classes and genders if we are to understand the dynamics of social reform and its attendant social sciences. They return intellectual and political history to a richer consideration of social history than has sometimes been drawn upon. Certainly, they indicate how valuable it is to consider how the marginalized and weak yet exercise a degree of control in important areas of their lives. In this sense, they may seem to owe more to the agency emphasis of Thompson as opposed to the discourse emphasis of Michel Foucault. Yet, there are good reasons for reconsidering these issues in the light of Foucault’s analysis of biopower. Public health and poor laws are two important dimensions of how states constructed populations as an object of social policy. The three works considered here provide excellent accounts of the social context of ideas, but in choosing this emphasis, they leave less space for describing or accounting for innovations in discourse. Ideas are not just reactive but also proactive. To a certain degree, they help produce their own policy objects by creating the instruments that register and regulate those objects. Interventions in discourse can expand the accepted realm of the possible. They can provide good arguments and clear justifications for certain strategies while devaluing others.

This productive role for discourse is particularly important given the explicit presentism of these studies. In distinctive ways, each of these historical works addresses modern dilemmas. Lees organizes her account of the evolution of the poor law around the question of residualism and argues that a return to residualism has been implicit in the underfunding of welfare systems since the Second World War and explicit in the reintroduction of means testing in the 1980s. The message is clear. The reconsideration of the arguments used
against residualism in the past and the clear consequences residualism can be shown to have had in the past ought to give today’s reformers pause for thought. Yeo shows how the retreat from social science to sociology was conducted under the banner of a spurious objectivity. Some of the most moving passages in her book describe the undermining of working-class colleges and the working-class direction of curricula. The book ends with an attack on relativism in favor of Donna Haraway’s advocacy of partial and situated knowledges. There is, argues Yeo, genuine value in the limited perspectives offered from a particular social location. Indeed, we might ask of knowledges which groups they empower or disempower. Yeo suggests that by countering the empyreal claims of universities to objectivity, the cultural spaces created by initiatives such as community publishing might better be valued and nurtured. Hamlin also speaks of the need to reconstruct “a usable past that reopens possibility” (p. 14). In his case, this means recognizing two things. First, that conscious efforts are needed if cities are to be made livable. They could just deteriorate. Only concerted and contested efforts secured the sanitary infrastructure bequeathed to many cities by the Victorians. Second, by acknowledging the limited agenda that was enshrined as the public health problem by Chadwick and his followers, we might find our attention directed back to all those factors they shrouded in the miasmatic mist. We might take up again income distribution as a health issue, for example.

These are exciting ways of approaching history. Emphasizing agency, they restore dignity to subaltern groups. Highlighting the contingency of particular institutional arrangements, they allow us to think again about paths not taken, fenced off for unacceptable reasons or seen as too difficult at the time. New technologies may alter our evaluation of some of these options. So may new conceptions of citizenship and social responsibility. If we are to think in new ways about such matters, we need historical works that give attention to the ways the social imaginary is expanded, how innovations in discourse are conjured.

—Gerry Kearns
University of Cambridge

NOTES


CALIFORNIA CITIES AND THE TRANSFORMED LANDSCAPE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY


The late-nineteenth-century historian and publisher Hubert Howe Bancroft had a strong intuition that California history would someday become big business. The early 1900s proved Bancroft correct, and the state’s tourist and advertising industries led the way in packaging California’s past for mass consumption. Gold-rush towns, Spanish missions, and ancient redwood groves became destinations for travelers as well as engineered icons that adorned the covers of business brochures and fruit-shipping labels. California history appealed to urban and rural consumers, westerners and easterners alike, because it combined romantic attachments to a heroic past with stunning scenes from the contemporary landscape. The very success of these popular historical inventions, however, had an enduring impact on the professional standing of California historians. Throughout much of the twentieth century, many U.S. historians viewed the work of California specialists as parochial and hopelessly disengaged from important historiographic trends.

California studies began to shed that parochial reputation in the 1960s and 1970s for a combination of reasons. The Golden State served as a rich subject area for the revitalization of western history, and California’s natural landscape offered seemingly endless topics for the new interdisciplinary field of
environmental history. Urban historians, after neglecting western cities for decades, rediscovered that California and the West had been highly urbanized since the 1850s. Historians of culture, race, class, and politics descended on Los Angeles and San Francisco to unearth new epicenters of social diversity and conflict. Two factors in particular facilitated this resurgence of California scholarship. First, the Golden State provided a lively nexus for the commingling of different fields—a place where urban and rural environments, racial politics, waves of migration, and transnational economies had intersected over the previous 150 years. Second, studies of California were no longer just about California. Instead, some of the most compelling new work on the state spoke authoritatively to broader national and international historical concerns.

Certain issues have remained prominent since the beginnings of California scholarship. From H. H. Bancroft in the nineteenth century to Carey McWilliams and Mike Davis in the twentieth, California historians have focused on the state’s landscape as a site of social contest and constant physical transformation. The rural landscape embodied the Edenic imaginings of hopeful migrants and the divisive debates over land monopoly and water rights. The urban landscape periodically shook and burned, exerted tremendous power over its resource-rich hinterlands, and exhibited some of the nation’s most public battles over social inclusion and exclusion. In short, California’s history is inextricably connected to the landscape, turning debates over the landscape’s transformation into highly controversial affairs.

Despite their very different methodologies and forms, all the books reviewed here contribute to this ongoing discussion of the California landscape. The strength (though not the only focus) of these volumes is twentieth-century urban history and, more specifically, Los Angeles’s development as a major metropolis, warts and all. Each poses separate questions that may appear quite divergent: how should we reconcile two contradictory notions of place? What should we make of a visionary plan that could have created an entirely different urban landscape? Did the twentieth century’s most pivotal event, World War II, alter California in the manner we think it did? And, finally, is it too late to correct a century of landscape despoliation and misguided politics? Different agendas aside, these books probe the intersection between the imagined and real efforts of Californians to transform the state’s landscape.

Californians have long wrestled with two competing visions of the state. On one hand, California was understood as an Arcadian found natural paradise; on the other, it was seen as a Utopian empty space inviting development. William Alexander McClung studies these “Anglo mythologies” in Los Angeles through various cultural productions, including architecture, landscaping, literature, photography, and painting. He argues that Anglo Los Angelenos reconciled their Arcadian and Utopian fantasies “in ways peculiar to this region and to the civilization that invoked and celebrated them” (p. xvi). This argument is hardly new. Indeed, we can trace its lineage back through the works of David Wyatt, Kevin Starr, and Henry Nash Smith. But McClung refines and
distills this message to Los Angeles in particular and, in the process, produces a stunning portrait of one of the nation’s most imagined and reimagined cities.

The Utopian metaphor is difficult to avoid in Los Angeles’ steady transformation from Mexican pueblo to Pacific Coast metropolis. The built environment came fast and furious after the 1880s, with citrus groves, streetcar lines, scattered tourist attractions, and dreamed-up towns like Van Nuys “waiting not only to be populated but to be conjured into existence out of a non-space” (p. 6). While Los Angeles’ detractors viewed this process as uncoordinated sprawl, recent studies emphasize a definite method to the madness. City leaders—and not just real estate developers—were planning for the future as they pieced together a multicentered urban space in the Southland. Los Angeles’s infamous water grab from Owens Valley, followed a generation later by the city’s siphoning of the Colorado River, illustrates the depth of these dreams and the extent to which, as McClung writes, “the promised land of Southern California has extracted a Utopian commitment” (pp. 14-15). Utopia came in all scales, from the Los Angeles aqueduct to house design, which McClung illustrates with two photographs (pre- and post-landscaping) of the modern-style Von Sternberg House, built in 1935. It may be McClung’s use of examples from this smaller scale (gardens, citrus crate labels, swimming pools) that renders the larger vision most comprehensible.

Los Angeles, McClung notes, “did not so much grow as sell itself into existence” (p. 33). This was a literary venture as much as anything else, with contributions from advertising hacks, novelists, playwrights, lyricists, and thousands of recent midwestern transplants who wrote home about their newfound promised land. Here again the Arcadian and Utopian mythologies played off one another. Generations of writers, from Helen Hunt Jackson to William Faulkner, heralded the native terrain and climate, even as the landscape was engineered and the skies increasingly choked with smog. The very light of the region required the literary attention of observers like Carey McWilliams: “But this is not desert light nor is it tropical for it has neutral tones. It is Southern California light and it has no counterpart in the world.” Similar observations of the environment infused the work of writers who romanticized the lost landscape and writers who celebrated the built one. As the landscape changed, so changed the literary uses of the past, dramatized most explicitly in Helen Hunt Jackson’s Ramona (1884) and its stage reincarnation as the “Mission Play” that entertained audiences continuously for two decades after 1912.

Transitioning from literature to architecture and urban planning, McClung devotes a lengthy chapter to “The Shapes of L.A.” He notes that Los Angeles is “an unstable synthesis of several conceptual models” that overlap in space and time: wilderness, countryside, park, village, acropolis, and road (p. 113). These are artificial categories at best, but they have a certain logic for anyone who has driven in mid-January from the San Gabriel’s snow-capped peaks through downtown and out to sunny Malibu, with stops along the way at the
Huntington Gardens, Olvera Street, and the Getty Center. Such a drive is much like reading “The Shapes of L.A.,” in which McClung effectively integrates the various scales of urban space with the historical and intellectual trends of the twentieth century. McClung provides no clear conclusion; the chapter ends with Joan Didion’s character Maria Wyeth maneuvering effortlessly down Los Angeles’ crowded freeways. Instead, we are left with a compelling triangulation of the Los Angeles experience—space, time, and thought converge on the jumble of freeway arteries that allow Los Angeles to work.

One small confession: I, like McClung (who teaches at Mississippi State University), underwent a Los Angeles conversion experience during a visiting instructorship in Southern California. Landscapes of Desire brought home the reasons for my change of heart about the city. It is a beautifully written and richly illustrated interpretation of Los Angeles’ cultural inventions, a study that unites the written word with painting, photography, architecture, and urban planning. Those inventions are steeped in and dependent on mythologizing the city’s past: a Mexican pueblo reinvented as a Mediterranean paradise where the Spanish “civilized” Indians, a splendid garden that rightfully reclaimed its water from a far-off desert, and a sinful city that will redeem itself with a Utopian future. In Los Angeles we have the un-self-conscious promotion and contestation of these myths, which McClung dissects with clarity and imagination.

McClung’s study falters in areas where other Los Angeles historians have marvelously succeeded. Despite the book’s subtitle—Anglo Mythologies of Los Angeles—the issue of race is curiously downplayed in a city whose cultural reinventions all but depended on the whitewashing of its history. McClung touches on race most directly in his discussions of Jackson’s Ramona, but even here the focus is more on notions of progress rather than the determined efforts of Anglo leaders to reformulate and obscure the Mexican past and present. This example also suggests a methodological problem—the brief treatment of Ramona quickly segues into an analysis of the cover illustration for a 1929 chamber of commerce pamphlet and then a 1969 publication by the Historical Society of Southern California (pp. 74-80). Throughout the book, McClung’s ability to move across time and form is remarkable and fascinating, but it often seems ahistorical. The revisions of the Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo pasts throughout the twentieth century were always contingent on changing demographics and contemporary ideologies, such as evolving notions of race. These historical connections deserve McClung’s attention, given the recent studies by George Sanchez, Timothy Fong, Lisbeth Haas, and other historians.7

If Los Angeles in McClung’s book is a city of conflicting and overlapping cultural landscapes, Eden by Design reveals an urban landscape that might have been remarkably different. There is a haunting, almost spectral presence in this book, as it re-presents the entire report “Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region,” written in 1930 by the premier...
landscape architecture firms Olmsted Brothers and Harland Bartholomew and Associates. The Olmsted-Bartholomew plan, commissioned by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, constituted a visionary reorganization of urban space. Parks, playgrounds, and beaches—but also the entire relationship between Southlanders and their environment—would be very different today had the plan been implemented. By republishing the report, Greg Hise and William Deverell conjure up an apparition from the city’s past that serves as a valuable reminder of urban landscape possibilities.

Hise and Deverell’s introduction provides the necessary context for understanding the Olmsted-Bartholomew plan. Los Angeles grew rapidly during the 1920s—its population more than doubled from 900,000 to 2.2 million residents, industrial production boomed, and residential development filled hillsides and canyons. In an attempt to organize development in the Los Angeles basin, a self-proclaimed Citizens’ Committee appeared in 1927 (led primarily by members of the powerful Chamber of Commerce) and through private subscriptions hired the Olmsted and Bartholomew firms to rationalize the city’s use of public and private space. Three years earlier, these firms had produced an extensive study of traffic and transit for Los Angeles, and their 1930 plan also utilized earlier works in Los Angeles city planning, most notably The Better City (1907) by progressive reformer Dana Bartlett and Griffith J. Griffith’s Parks, Boulevards and Playgrounds (1910). Clearly, Los Angeles had a long tradition of planning a better city and an equally long tradition of forestalling those plans.

Both of these factors—the city’s exceptional growth and planning struggles—provide the sense of urgency that runs throughout the Olmsted-Bartholomew report. The Citizens’ Committee’s introductory Letter of Transmittal invokes a situation “so disquieting as to . . . the present crisis in the welfare of Los Angeles and the surrounding region” (p. 78). Olmsted and Bartholomew predict the region will lose “its most valued charms for lack of a methodical plan,” its “prosperity” threatened as the city grows “less and less wholesome,” and eventually the “growth of the Region will tend to strangle itself” (p. 83). They suggest the necessity of an integrated plan administered by proper authorities to deal with the issues of land acquisition, land use, transportation, and improvements. What becomes clear throughout the 178-page report is that Olmsted and Bartholomew reconciled the broadest issues of urban finance and governance with the minutia of designing a specific neighborhood playground or parking lot. The juxtaposition of these different scales makes the plan a fascinating read.

In its briefest outline, the report advocated the expenditure of $233 million (over several decades) for the acquisition and improvement of private and public lands in the Los Angeles region. The proposal included the renovation of beaches and coastal access, playgrounds and athletic fields, regional parks and “large reservations” in the mountains, canyons, deserts, and coastal islands. To integrate these public spaces—or as Olmsted-Bartholomew put it, to transcend
the “evils of the ‘friction of distance’” (p. 109)—a remarkable network of parkways would function as transport corridors throughout the region. To support its recommendations, the report contained detailed comparisons to similar projects in other urban centers, various cost-benefit analyses, and more than sixty plates (from foldout colored maps to photographs of “typical” scenery). The report’s tone was tantalizing at times, inviting its audience to imagine a better city. But that tone could also shift to a mixture of condescension and caution:

The big question is whether the people are socially and politically so slow, in comparison with the amazing rapidity of urban growth here, that they will dumbly let the procession go by and pay a heavy penalty in later years for their slowness and timidity today. (p. 126)

In Los Angeles, California, and the American West as a whole, the issue of landscape appreciation and utilization often pivots on the question of distance. How should people transport themselves across such a vast space? During the 1920s, the people of Los Angeles increasingly answered this question by turning to the automobile. The report not only endorses this choice, with thirty-five pages devoted to sixty-two proposed parkways, but also suggests that getting to any given destination should be as enjoyable and scenic as the destination itself. The parkways would be broad and surrounded by open areas. Natural foliage would cleverly conceal the parking lots and turnarounds on these “pleasureway parks” (p. 193). Such a vision is surely jarring to anyone who currently spends much time on Los Angeles’ freeways or surface streets (the Arroyo Seco Parkway excepted), but the plan was undoubtedly practical in the 1920s and 1930s. This mental juxtaposition of the past and the present—of what is and what could have been—will leave many readers of the Olmsted-Bartholomew plan with a new appreciation for historical contingencies and, perhaps, with a profound sense of loss.

Hise and Deverell provide a multicausal explanation for the plan’s rejection by the Chamber of Commerce and, in so doing, make an important contribution to questions of power and governance in urban and Los Angeles studies. In hindsight, the most obvious explanation would appear to be the Great Depression that closed in on California shortly after the release of “Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches.” But the Chamber of Commerce scuttled support for the plan prior to the depression’s impact, and tensions within the Citizens’ Committee and between the chamber and the committee proved instrumental in its defeat. Hise and Deverell’s explanation combines Mike Davis’s argument for multiple private power centers in Los Angeles with Steve Erie’s attention to urban public sector financing. Of course, no public or private finances materialized for the Olmsted-Bartholomew plan. As the editors point out, the report is therefore a “useful case study, a textbook example of the distance that separates a plan, a vision of the future, from its realization” (p. 53).
The republication of the report, however, is much more than a “useful case study” of early-twentieth-century urban planning. This volume presents a truly unique document, richly illustrated with maps of 1920s Los Angeles and diagrams of the futuristic city. (Unfortunately, the original foldout colored maps lose much detail in this printing, but copies of the original plan can be found in numerous archives around the country.) Similar to the splendid irrigation reports by the late-nineteenth-century California water engineer William Hammond Hall, the Olmsted-Bartholomew report offers detailed insight into the city’s past landscape and the multiple forces attempting to shape it. Where Hall’s reports encompassed the entire state and prophesized the extensive waterscape transformations that soon appeared, the Olmsted-Bartholomew document shows us the landscape that ultimately did not materialize in Los Angeles. Hise and Deverell could have extended their discussion to describe the metropolitan region that actually did take shape in the three decades after 1930, though this subject is touched on in the editors’ concluding interview with landscape architect Laurie Olin.

These decades witnessed tremendous changes throughout California, and the Second World War may have provided the crucial turning point. Roger W. Lotchin’s edited volume, *The Way We Really Were: The Golden State in the Second Great War*, confronts a central debate in California historiography: to what extent did World War II transform the state and region? To some historians, the answer seems obvious. The Second World War brought an avalanche of federal spending for industries and infrastructure, a wave of diverse immigrants who mostly remained after the war, and unparalleled urban growth in San Diego, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area. In just a few short years, Gerald Nash argues in his often-cited studies, the American West was transformed from a “backward colonial region” to “an economic pacesetter for the nation”—and California led the way. While few historians question the war’s powerful importance for California, many others now emphasize the continuities between prewar and postwar California rather than cataclysmic change. In some ways, this debate goes to the heart of historical causation in the Golden State. As with California’s earthquakes, our fixation with the next Big One obscures the fact that more subtle tectonic shifts occur throughout the state every day. Lotchin sits on the evolution or continuity side of this debate. He writes, “World War II laid the foundations, or built on pre-existing foundations, for extensive change in California, but it did not create revolutionary change” (pp. 11-12).

Some essay collections hold together better than others, and this collection reflects California’s own divisions along social, political, economic, and regional lines. One area of focus is the experience of different social groups during the war, including women, Chinese Americans, Italian Americans, Mexican Americans, and African Americans. A second focus involves the state’s political economy, with attention to broad economic trends, political strategies, and the transformation of one industrial sector (oil). A third
category deals with shifts in popular culture, specifically film and music. Urban development, broadly conceived, is the strongest thread uniting these essays, since California cities played host to the demographic and economic growth that drove cultural and political change.

The most compelling essays in this volume have little in common. Ronald Cohen’s contribution, “Music Goes to War: California, 1940-45,” is a marvelous portrait of Californians’ diverse and evolving musical tastes. “The war years were surely no break from the past,” Cohen argues, “but provided vibrant musical continuity in California as well as nationwide, while underscoring, even sharpening, particular racial, cultural, and stylistic trends” (p. 47). The musical subcultures both reflected and challenged racial separation in San Francisco and Los Angeles, while artistic cross-pollination offered a glimpse of the future in terms of music and social movements. Shifting from culture to economic analysis, Paul Rhode’s quantitative study of defense spending constitutes one of the most important recent additions to California economic history. Rhode shows that the state’s prewar economic capacity facilitated the exceedingly large federal expenditures in California (the highest in the nation) and that “the highly responsive nature of the region’s labor supply circa 1940 allowed the enormous expansion to occur” (p. 112). Like Cohen, Rhode argues for continuity rather than abrupt change in wartime California, and his statistical evidence offers vital data for reassessing the war’s impact.

Undoubtedly, important changes did take place for Italian Americans during the war, and the essay by Gary Mormino and George Pozzetta underscores these changes. Italians comprised California’s largest European immigrant group, with 40 percent living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Prior to the war, Italian Americans expressed a strong affinity for fascism through social clubs, private schools, and a remarkably widespread pro-fascist media. The war not only altered these ideological allegiances but also “challenged and shattered the isolation and insularity of Italian-American communities” (p. 150). While this is hardly surprising, Mormino and Pozzetta nonetheless provide a fascinating glimpse at the internal dialogues and tensions that forever changed San Francisco’s Italian American community and the city itself. Equally strong is Jacqueline Braitman’s essay on the political activity of women during the war. “Rosie the Riveter,” she rightly points out, has dominated our view of women’s involvement in the war. Braitman shifts the focus to women’s partisan involvement and discovers continuity (in political objectives and employment) as well as change (increasing the structural integration of women in politics). “It is possible,” Braitman concludes, “to challenge the notion that the war years saw little in the way of major women’s political achievements” (p. 230). Her essay is an important step in that direction.

*The Way We Really Were* contains some other strong essays, especially William Issel’s detailed study of San Francisco political culture and Sarah Elkind’s piece on the oil industry and tidelands controversy. In all, urban historians should find much to appreciate in this volume, first and foremost because
World War II was a profoundly urban phenomena in the state. This urban perspective is explicit in some of the essays, but the book as a whole lacks a compelling argument about California wartime cities as intersections of sweeping change. This volume could also forecast the postwar years more effectively by showing how the war accelerated existing social, cultural, political, and economic forces that made California cities important sites for postwar contests over integration, economic inclusion, and development. Nonetheless, The Way We Really Were represents the most important essay collection to date on wartime California.

From California’s coastal cities to the countryside, the war years had a tremendous impact on California’s landscape and environment. Air pollution increased, raw sewerage and oil spills soaked many beaches, resource exploitation rose with wartime necessity, and development—from rural water projects to urban growth—proceeded at breakneck speed with little regard for planning. The pace of growth escalated during this period, and yet the fact of rapid willy-nilly development runs throughout much of California history. In Transforming California: A Political History of Land Use and Development, Stephanie Pincetl looks back at the state’s developmental patterns for the origins of its current predicament. Pincetl contends that “California’s political paralysis, environmental degradation, and economic inequality are due, in large part, to the structure of the state’s systems of governance from local city halls to Sacramento” (p. xi). Pincetl finds a state polarized along race and class lines and a cynical public alienated from its own government institutions. The book, and especially its concluding chapter, is an impassioned call for democratic participation and the renewal of citizenship. In connecting these sociopolitical issues with environmental and land use problems, Pincetl pursues a central theme of California historiography.

This is an extremely ambitious and wide-ranging study that covers the years from the Gilded Age to the 1990s. The book’s central premise—that a century of errant land use planning guided by entrenched interests has led to environmental decline and social inequality—is shared by many Californians today. Unfortunately, this study contains an unnecessarily simplistic fall guy. Pincetl argues that the Progressive Era reformer and, more broadly, early-twentieth-century political reforms produced a system of weak political parties and strong special interests that “made democratic participation increasingly difficult over time—and place” (p. xii).

The study’s dualistic conflict is between “idealistic visions for the state’s future—based on science and romanticism, planning and coordination—and capitalist development” (p. 3). Pincetl depicts the years prior to progressivism as open to alternative futures, with individuals like John Muir supporting natural preservation and followers of the Workingman’s Party expressing antimonopoly politics. Natural resource exploitation nonetheless continued at an industrial pace as land and water rights became concentrated in fewer hands. “Against this backdrop of turmoil and change,” Pincetl writes, “a
modern political reform movement coalesced” (p. 25). Here we land in the interpretive thicket of the Progressive Era, where questions as to their origins, motives, ideologies, and legacies remain controversial at best. If recent studies tell us anything, California reformers were a motley crew who expressed all of Daniel Rodgers’s “languages of progressivism” and then some. Pincetl acknowledges as much, but she also asserts blanket statements about “the Progressives” that ultimately raise more questions than they answer. Pincetl is certain about their legacy for twentieth-century California: “Progressives disconnected politics from democracy, gutting the politics, the very activity by which the broad public acts together to build democracy. In its stead Progressives put managerialism” (p. 29). The rest of the book charts the chronological development of this managerialism and its attendant impact on the state’s environment and democratic process.

During the interwar years, business associationalism enabled California’s free-market environment, while “alternate [political] visions” like Upton Sinclair’s EPIC program were “pushed aside” (p. 106). Pincetl argues that Progressive reforms had created a leadership vacuum filled by various boards and commissions, and those bodies favored the developmental goals of corporate agriculture, the timber industry, and suburban builders. The Second World War receives only a few introductory pages in a lengthy chapter on postwar growth and development, which surveys the local and statewide conflicts over growth, from Earl Warren’s administration (1939-53) to Ronald Reagan’s (1967-75). The textbook-style treatment of a dizzying array of issues (Eichler houses, Save the Bay, the Watts Rebellion, the State Water Project, and so on) is both too much and too little; in the end it all appears to be a “legacy” or “result” of Progressive Era legislation (pp. 168-9).

The strength of this study is the chapter on environmentalism during Governor Jerry Brown’s administration. Pincetl examines the fascinating convergence of forces in the 1970s, including a fractious environmental movement, grassroots activism on the Left and Right, and Governor Brown’s tepid support from the Democratic Party. A “Progressive’s Progressive,” Pincetl writes, “Brown was an anti-politics politician because he did not see a role for partisanship or party” (p. 199). While he supported environmental protection, Brown faced some of the toughest environmental issues that deeply split Californians—timber harvests, coastal protection, and the Peripheral Canal (which Brown favored but voters repealed with Proposition 8). By the end of Brown’s second term in office, his vision for reform was unfulfilled, and citizens were left deeply alienated from government. “The stage was set for the disintegration of the government of the state of California,” Pincetl writes, and the following chapter charts this disintegration during the progrowth administrations of George Deukmejian and Pete Wilson (p. 238).

Pincetl concludes Transforming California with an ardent call to overcome gridlock, promote democratic participation, and reinvigorate citizenship as a form of identity. “There is no blueprint for change,” Pincetl states, though she
does advance a twelve-point plan that would be “a small step toward revitalizing democracy” (pp. 314-16). Many present-day Progressives (and even some conservatives) would undoubtedly agree with this call for reform. But it is less likely that many of them would trace the state’s current dilemmas back almost a hundred years to the short period of Progressive Era reform.

As many historians have argued, Californians were in the nation’s reformist vanguard in the early twentieth century, and their various agendas had an impact on the state and nation for decades to come. Yet their motivations and works hardly formed the coherent legacy portrayed by Pincetl. Los Angeles club women initiated strong campaigns for gender equity in the court systems and also practiced severe types of social policing over their young, working-class targets. California educators mapped out a two- and four-year college system that soon led the nation in terms of quality and social inclusion. Conservationists certainly enshrined a utilitarian approach to natural resource exploitation, but their motivations were quite diverse—and in some ways similar to the actions of preservationists like John Muir, who fought to preserve the high Sierra while celebrating the engineering of ecological communities in the Central Valley. Even the most enduring political reform of the Progressive Era—the initiative, referendum, and recall—had a mixed legacy of legislative inaction and voter involvement (even if today’s Progressives detest some initiatives’ outcomes). The point here is twofold. First, California’s early-twentieth-century reformers were an incredibly mixed lot whose conflicts and ideological inconsistencies cannot be understood through singular causes or outcomes. Second, their political acts established certain forms of governance, but those forms were inevitably altered and sometimes superseded by political reorganizations during the New Deal, World War II, and postwar periods.

Those who share Pincetl’s concern for democratic involvement and environmental protection may nonetheless question her emphasis on and reading of the Progressive Era. Lobbyists and corrupt commissions hardly filled a new or unique role in California politics during the twentieth century, unless we discount their nineteenth-century counterparts who wrote the laws that placed the state’s land, water, and resources in the hands of corporate enterprises. Pincetl’s argument about the withering of political parties after the Progressive Era also merits further consideration. The fracturing of the two-party system certainly contributed to the reformists’ rise in power, but the Democratic and Republican parties reappeared with surprising strength in the 1920s and 1930s. The fact that some politicians dressed themselves in nonpartisan garb may suggest more about political expediency than any lack of strong partisanship at the local and state levels. Finally, an understanding of California’s twentieth-century environmental politics requires some means of comparison with the experiences of other western states and the nation as a whole.

These four volumes demonstrate how far California studies have evolved during the past three decades. Each benefits from a generation of formidable
scholarship on the natural and constructed environment—on California’s water wars, revolutionary changes in agriculture, urban renovations, and the culturally mapped landscapes. They also raise significant questions about power, politics, and key turning points in the Golden State’s history. From the Progressive Era to World War II and beyond, California has frequently led the nation’s polity and economy into uncharted terrain. California studies, and these books in particular, suggest the persistence and vitality of Arcadian imaginings for a better city, a preserved environment, and a more prosperous future. The state’s landscape is destined to remain at the center of these social and historical issues, not despite but because California’s landscape has been engineered as much as any place in the world.

—David Igler
University of Utah

NOTES


2. James Gregory, American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California (New York, 1989); Mary Odem, Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920 (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995); and Mary P. Ryan, Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

3. Hubert Howe Bancroft, The History of California, 7 vols. (San Francisco, 1890); Carey McWilliams, Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Labor in California (Boston, 1939); and Mike Davis, City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles (London, 1990).


8. Citations are to the book’s pagination, not the original pagination of the Olmsted-Bartholomew report, which also appears in the volume.

9. The financial and planning matters are discussed at the end of Eden by Design in an interview between the editors and landscape architect Laurie Olin.


This is clearly a time to celebrate a massive achievement. The sustained labors over the past thirty years of nearly ninety historians, archaeologists, and geographers from Britain, continental Europe, and North America have finally borne fruit in three weighty volumes devoted to the urban history of Britain from Anglo-Saxon times to the mid-twentieth century. The history of the emergence and development of the first modern urban nation has been written. The volumes are now ready to take their place on the shelves of university libraries alongside that other multivolume authoritative work from the Cambridge stable, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* and, like the latter, will be drawn upon by successive generations of academics and students. The path was originally laid by such major seminal figures of the last decades of the twentieth century as W. G. Hoskins, Jim Dyos, and Alan Everitt, and the University of Leicester, with its research strengths in the centers for urban and local history, has played a presiding and facilitating role. Yet it is Peter Clark, with his dedication and enthusiasm, who has finally brought this phenomenally ambitious venture to completion. This review essay, however, is much less ambitious in its scope, limiting itself to the second volume of the three,
with its predominantly early modern focus, and three other recent works on urban politics and religion in England within the same time span.

The *Cambridge Urban History* is that of Britain and in that important respect it can accurately lay claim to novelty at the very outset by placing English, Welsh, and Scottish urbanization within a comparative framework. Yet, having decided to introduce this innovative feature, why exclude Ireland, which was arguably no less urbanized and interconnected with Britain in its urban development than Wales for much of the early modern period? The inclusion of Ireland would have brought the volume into harmony with the New British History, with its insistence on the profit to be gained from seeing developments within a British and Irish dimension. The volume has a tripartite structure that appears to work well. Part I, by far the shortest part, is devoted to area surveys encompassing the whole three-hundred-year period of 1540 to 1840. The limits of the normally accepted chronological definition of the early modern period are appropriately extended so as to accommodate the eventual arrival of an urban nation rather than abandoning the story before the final chapter. Defining the various English regions is not without its problems. To some extent, they were “regions of the mind” based on a shared geography, history, and culture, and East Anglia seems to fit comfortably into this definition. Yet, at the other extreme, the Midlands lacks such conceptual clarity, and the region’s historian is driven back on a negative definition: the Midlands were “that area which is left when more distinctive provincial blocks are removed” (p. 93). Similarly, there is a lack of consensus among historians as to what constitutes “the North,” and the description is rarely used as an analytical category. Even Wales poses a problem as far as regional definition is concerned given that, for much of the period, its major urban centers were on English soil. Parts II and III, the vast bulk of the volume, focus on urban themes and types, and the two parts are divided chronologically into 1540-1700 and 1700-1840. Making 1700 a watershed makes sense in terms of urban growth, which appears to have been relatively sluggish in the earlier period, and the later emergence of new urban types, such as cultural and leisure centers and industrializing towns. Some of the most interesting and refreshing work is to be found in these two parts, while the area surveys can be marred by conceptual vagueness and have a tendency to disappear into a confusing mass of detail. There is no doubt that the volume’s survey of the most up-to-date findings of research in the field is truly impressive, with a select bibliography that runs to twenty-two pages and nearly six hundred titles and with footnotes containing references to a wide range of research materials. It is also supported by some striking plates, informative and clear maps, and an array of figures and tables.

In his capacity as editor, Clark makes it plain in his introduction that he has made no attempt to impose “a rigid party line” (p. 24) when faced with the divergent opinions of some of the volume’s contributors. While on one level this hands-off approach is commendable, disagreement and debate being the very lifeblood of academic history, it does inevitably give rise to serious
problems so far as the volume’s overall coherence is concerned. Nowhere is this more apparent than when addressing the fundamental question, in pursuit of the elusive “urban factor,” What is a town? The answers given by some contributors, with the odd ritualistic acknowledgment that it is a notoriously difficult question to address, follow a traditional line: a town required a concentration of population (if often modest), a market, a range of nonagrarian occupations (perhaps at least half), and a contemporary perception that it “felt urban.” Larger towns normally involved a substantial population (numbered in thousands), a developed urban economy and society, distinctive political and administrative structures, and a cultural influence extending beyond the immediate hinterland.

A range of views are accordingly presented on urban population size and growth rates and their significance. Apart from London (a major exception), and Edinburgh and a few other middle-ranking towns and cities, for much of the early modern period, it is argued, urban life was conducted in a multitude of very small market centers, often with populations as low as a few hundred inhabitants. In the case of Wales, Philip Jenkins questions whether it is valid to speak of an urban history of the principality at all prior to the nineteenth century. He estimates that even if very small towns, with just a few hundred inhabitants, are included in the calculation, the urban proportion of the population of Wales in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries barely reached 11 percent. Recalling Defoe’s portrayal of Carmarthen (with three thousand people) as “the London of Wales” eloquently makes the point. Turning to England, Alan Dyer insists that very small market centers are still to be described as urban and cites comparative work done on early modern Scotland that argues that Scottish market centers, with populations of less than five hundred, can often be regarded as urban. But the key question is what distinguished a small town from a larger village. Dyer sees the possession of a market as the litmus test for a town, yet he immediately qualifies this distinction by arguing that, in a proportion of the smallest settlements, marketing could be very limited and their economic structures could exhibit a considerable agrarian element. Muddying the waters even further, he suggests that “market villages” might be a more accurate term to apply to these kinds of settlement. It may make good sense to conclude that all towns had markets yet not all markets were in towns, but it gets us no further in our search for a workable definition. Penelope Corfield in her chapter on East Anglian towns also draws attention to the difficulty of clearly demarcating the small town from the large village. She adopts a very low urban threshold to serve her argument and establishes a category of “micro-towns.” Surveying urbanization in the South West around 1660, Jonathan Barry includes in his statistics some settlements that he acknowledges were of only marginal urban status. About 5 percent of his urban total lived in centers that “were neither market towns at that date nor clearly already urban in character” (p. 71).
The problem of definition persists into the eighteenth century and beyond. In his fascinating and informative study of health and leisure resorts, Peter Borsay observes that perhaps most Georgian resorts would have found it difficult to gain recognition as a town on the basis of their size, political structure, and appearance. He introduces us to many resorts that were essentially “proto-towns” containing the seeds of urbanism within them. Given the differences of opinion and perspective about what constituted a town, and the incomplete data for the pre-1801 period, it is inevitable that controversy has also developed over precise rates of urban growth. Setting a relatively high urban threshold of more than five thousand inhabitants, chapter 6 suggests that 5 percent of England’s population lived in towns by 1540 and 8 percent by 1600. Using a wider definition of towns, chapter 5 argues that by 1700 England’s urban population had risen to 30 to 33 percent, with 22 to 25 percent in Scotland and 13 to 15 percent in Wales. However, John Langton in chapter 14 reaches the remarkable conclusion that in the late seventeenth century 40 percent of England’s population were already urban dwellers, with the figures for Wales and Scotland standing at 33 percent and 25 percent, respectively. The data provided by the 1801 census has provided the basis for more consensus among historians charting urban growth, and it is generally accepted that Britain’s urban population increased from 42 percent in 1801 to 51 percent in 1841.

In recent decades, the attention of urban historians has been extended from the familiar preoccupation with demography, trade, politics, and religion to embrace such varied topics as migration, disease and fertility, work, women’s experiences, service industries, the professions, recreation and leisure, household organization, and consumption patterns. Many of the essays in the *Cambridge Urban History* reflect at least some of these major shifts of interest, although it is freely acknowledged that there is still much work to be done. Thus, among the essays on urban themes and types are studies of “Population and Disease, Estrangement and Belonging 1540-1700,” “Population and Society 1700-1840,” “Culture and Leisure 1700-1840,” “Health and Leisure Resorts 1700-1840,” and “Industrialising Towns 1700-1840.” Yet further research is needed on women (who rose to such prominence during the early modern period as urban domesticservants), urban artisans and the “middling sort” generally, consumption patterns (especially among the laboring poor), small towns, regions other than lowland England and central Scotland, and the food supply of rapidly expanding towns like Manchester. Somewhat surprisingly, given Clark’s own central role in it, the “pessimist versus optimist” debate about urban development in the early modern period seems largely notable by its absence, as though the controversy had burned itself out, with some modest dissent to the optimistic model being registered only by the contributors to chapter 6. In place of the earlier emphasis by Clark and fellow “pessimists” on the growth of oligarchy and social and political polarization leading to confrontation and unrest, contributions by Jeremy Boulton and Ian
Archer present a more positive viewpoint, arguing that urban dynasties were rare, power was more widely dispersed than has been traditionally recognized, vertical ties were strong, and there was an enduring sense of community. Contemporaries themselves in the eighteenth century could feel real optimism when they viewed the achievements and prospects of urban government, but that was to change to increasing pessimism in the early nineteenth century as epidemic diseases and deteriorating living conditions made their impact. Another long overdue and important change of emphasis and direction signaled by this volume is the questioning of an urban history written largely in terms of the polarities of “urban” and “rural.” It is recognized that the urban-rural divide was often more apparent than real; much agricultural production took place within towns, while rural economies were seldom solely agricultural. Furthermore, much early industrial development too was located in a rural environment. Accelerated industrialization and urbanization may have run chronologically in parallel, but the relationship between the two is a much more complex affair than has been generally recognized. The interdependence of town and country, as chapter 5 demonstrates, is a crucial fact meriting further research and not only because of its importance in understanding the history and functions of small towns.

Two other books included here for review, those by Catherine Patterson and Paul Halliday, start with the obvious advantages that they are exclusively concerned with corporate towns and are more restricted and focused in terms of their themes, geography, and chronology. Both works are primarily studies of urban politics in England, Patterson in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and Halliday in the second half of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, but great care is also taken to place that politics in the wider context of the governance of the early modern English state. Both are outright rejections of the pessimistic school of early modern urban history and are essentially optimistic analyses.

With Mark Kishlansky as her mentor, it comes as no surprise to learn that Patterson is a committed revisionist who condemns those historians whose search for the origins of the English civil war and revolution has led them to adopt a largely negative attitude to her chosen sixty-year period of 1580 to 1640. There is a history to be written, she insists, of how government actually worked during those decades and, in particular, how central and local governments interacted to preserve peace and create order, and that is the goal she sets for herself. A selection of incorporated towns with populations of between three thousand and ten thousand, and a wide geographical spread, lie at the center of the study. Exeter, Leicester, Dover, Chester, Ipswich, and Great Yarmouth are among the dozen or so towns that feature prominently in her analysis. The emphasis is on provincial England, and consequently, London is excluded from the discussion. Her principal sources are the correspondence and other records bequeathed by urban magistrates, and hence, attention is directed to the upper reaches of urban government to the neglect of the urban
population as a whole. The three main players in urban politics she identifies as the corporate towns themselves, the landed elite, and the Crown, and great stress is laid on patronage in enabling this trinity to deliver stable government and to integrate provincial towns into the English state. Thus, the research into court politics conducted by such perceptive scholars as Wallace MacCaffrey and Linda Levy Peck provides an initial framework of analysis for Patterson’s urban concerns. She emphatically rejects the negative assessment of the relationship between the three players previously advanced by Peter Clark and other urban pessimists. It was not a matter of towns increasingly falling prey to outside influence and interference by the Crown and local gentry, leading to mutual antagonism. Nor is the antagonistic model presented by J. E. Neale in his work on parliamentary patronage in the boroughs confirmed by Patterson’s research. As a good revisionist, her emphasis is on cooperation, negotiation, and at least until the mid-1630s, the ability and willingness to procure a resolution of conflict whenever it arose. Much of this is familiar territory, but it is a story well told and amply supported by some painstaking archival research. The most novel feature of her book is its perspective, urban and provincial, and her mastery of some unfamiliar sources.

The first question Patterson has to answer is, Why did corporations seek patrons? In the decades concerned, towns were no longer satisfied with the services of the local gentry as patrons but sought out peers, bishops, and central government officials. In other words, civic leaders were out to enlist the aid of some of the most powerful men in England to serve the purposes of themselves and their communities. Far from seeking to distance themselves from the ruling elite in the interest of autonomy, towns invited them in so as to gain access to power, including, ultimately, the very fount of power, the Crown itself, and in this way towns came to be integrated into the English state. The general push in the sixteenth century for towns to obtain charters of incorporation, and to develop the office of high steward as an honor to be bestowed on patrons by corporations, is to be viewed in that light. Nevertheless, the resultant relationship between towns and their elite patrons was decidedly not one of slavish subservience; any attempts by patrons or their nominees to exercise control over urban government usually met with strong resistance. But ultimately there were many positive gains to be made from a patron’s “good lordship” and philanthropy in terms of royal charters, favorable parliamentary legislation, a willingness to act as a mediator in local disputes, the establishment of town schools, help with resolving urban poverty, and similar benefits.

Why did patrons intervene in corporations? Patterson presents a familiar list of the principal reciprocal benefits to be derived from the exercise of patronage: the enjoyment of deference and obedience from civic governors, gifts and hospitality with all the symbolism with which they were invested, corporate offices and the authority they conferred, nomination to parliamentary seats (although electoral influence has been overstressed), enhanced prestige in royal eyes, and advantageous leases of borough property for themselves or
their nominees. The chief problem for towns was one of maintaining a delicate balance between inviting in and rewarding a patron, on one hand, and retaining ultimate control of town affairs in civic hands, on the other. Finally, the Crown benefited from the order and stability these relations between town and patron encouraged and facilitated. Contemporaries believed that urban populations were inherently unstable and that there was a consequent need for strong local government. Urban patrons drawn from the governing elite were trustworthy hands; they could be relied on to work for peace and order in their respective towns, and in the process, they ensured that civic leaders would support the state, thus helping to integrate the locality with the center until the transformed circumstances of the mid-1630s. Patterson concludes her study with a well-documented and convincing case study of Leicester and the earls of Huntingdon, which demonstrates the benefits and, in the case of the fifth earl, the pitfalls of such relationships. The book is plainly well researched and cogently argued, yet the decision to focus on civic governors and ignore the wider urban political scene means that she is excluding a dimension in which conflict as well as cooperation could be an important feature of urban life requiring other mechanisms to maintain order. It also leaves her open to the charge that, in her determination to demonstrate the peace, order, and stability of England in those decades, she may be painting too rosy a picture.

Halliday’s study of partisan politics in England’s corporate boroughs from 1650 to 1730 accords conflict a high profile but with unanticipated results. His book is a model monograph that displays considerable erudition and refreshing originality. It is one of the best studies of post-Restoration politics to have appeared in recent years. Like Patterson, a large part of Halliday’s purpose is to challenge a previously negative analysis of corporate boroughs—the familiar story of urban oligarchy, “unreformed” government, and strong antagonism between Crown and borough. Given his chronology, closely allied to this is the additional historiographical debate about “absolutism” and “arbitrary government” under the later Stuarts. Halliday seeks answers to two basic questions: Where and how did partisan politics evolve, and what impact did it have? His answer to the first question is that it originally evolved in England’s borough corporations as a result of the religious rivalries and political purges of the 1640s and 1650s. The received view that partisan politics was a product of the Exclusion Crisis, and that it extended out from Parliament at the center to the localities, is rejected. In its place, Halliday argues that partisan competition in boroughs was flourishing long before the Exclusion Crisis and that it began in the localities, in towns rent by political divisions, and subsequently moved to the center. A form of two-party politics was operating in boroughs many years before the Whig and Tory labels became current. His response to the second question is even more remarkable: partisan politics, far from leading to urban instability, created the means for achieving stability by holding opponents in a state of dynamic tension.
Purges and counterpurges of civic governors, once established in the wake of the civil wars, were to continue for decades. Halliday sees the Corporation Act of 1661 as a watershed in this process; for the first time, men were statutorily excluded from local power entirely on religious grounds. A vengeful Parliament was taking aim at conscientious Presbyterians, but fortunately for the latter, the act largely failed to achieve its objectives, and a political unity founded on religious uniformity was never achieved. The ground was laid for bitter and protracted political struggles in the boroughs. There was nothing new, of course, about occasional conflict within corporations; indeed, it can be shown to be an intermittent feature of the pre-1640 period. Yet in the period that Halliday is concerned with, partisan politics in the boroughs possessed novelty in its level of organization, its persistence and continuity, and the alarm it generated among contemporaries. Each side was out to totally eradicate the other, whose legitimacy could never be recognized. Politics was a battle in which there were to be no prisoners. This led to what Halliday repeatedly refers to as “the paradox of partisan politics”: attempts to restore political unity produced disunity as urban opponents doggedly sought to exclude each other from power. He is at his most original when explaining why towns continued in this state of political disunity and internal tension. In the period under study, he argues, the court of King’s Bench, which was in the process of replacing the Privy Council as the overseer of local government, slowly established the principle that a man could not be removed from a governing body for his political opinions. Political opponents were thus forced to remain together as civic governors and, though political tensions were continued, their worst excesses were nevertheless contained.

Halliday’s revisionism also colors his analysis of the precise nature of the relationship between the king and his corporations. For most of the period, that relationship is best described as symbiotic rather than antagonistic. King and corporation, he maintains, relied on each other and shared goals and needs that they worked in concert to obtain. When the Crown began to search for a more dominant role in boroughs, civic leaders proved cooperative. Original moves to recharter English boroughs by quo warranto proceedings were prompted by towns themselves to serve their own interests and not necessarily those of the Crown. However, a deliberate policy of controlling corporations by giving the Crown, whenever it wished, complete power to purge their membership slowly evolved in the early 1680s with the initial impetus again coming from factions within the towns themselves. This book is based on the most thorough research in both national and town archives and is generally convincing in its line of analysis. Particular merit is to be found in its exploitation of legal records, indicating yet again how such sources can provide a basis for fresh insights when exploring intensively researched terrain.

The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640 is a contribution to Macmillan’s Themes in Focus series, and its title suggests that its theme is to
be the precise nature of the relationship between the emergence and development of Protestantism and the nature, character, and resources of English towns. In the introduction, its editors encourage that expectation by posing two interrelated questions: what did English towns do for the Reformation, and what did the Reformation do for the towns? However, neither question is addressed consistently in the essays contributed to the volume, and not enough is done to draw the individual contributions together and relate them to broader concerns. That the Reformation and towns enjoyed a special relationship with one another has become something of a shared assumption among most historians working in the field. A. G. Dickens’s observation on the German Reformation, that it was “an urban event,” has been repeatedly quoted, usually as a preliminary to a familiar enumeration of the key factors and circumstances that made towns fruitful territory for Protestantism. The *Cambridge Urban History of Britain* reviewed earlier in this essay includes discussion of this topic, although only chapter 8 is entirely devoted to the Reformation, as such, in an urban context. In the case of Wales, belief in the linkage between towns and Protestantism is held with absolute conviction; the three principal sixteenth-century Welsh towns were the only centers where the Reformation made much progress, and the slow growth of Welsh Protestantism is to be explained by the relative weakness of its urban base. In Scotland, too, Protestantism is said to have been better received in towns than in the countryside. Similarly, the importance of towns in the progress of the Reformation in England, and their subsequent significance as centers for Puritanism and dissent, is accepted by Vanessa Harding, the author of the relevant religious history essay in the *Cambridge Urban History*. Yet she also draws attention to the fact that Protestantism encountered early opposition in some towns and that the compliant responses of both town and countryside to the Marian restoration appear similar if not identical.

There clearly is something to debate, and at least one recent book has taken up the theme of the relationship between Protestantism and urban life and demonstrated its complexity. Its author, Robert Tittler, also contributes to the Themes in Focus volume, providing one of the four thematic essays with his account of townsmen benefiting from the purchase of church property. The problems of impoverished urban clergy, the religious and wider social effects of the dissolution of chantries and guilds, and the restrictions placed on voluntary religious activity are the subjects of the other thematic essays. The primary importance of urban leaders in advancing Protestantism is demonstrated in case study essays on the Reformation in Doncaster, Beverley, and Reading. In Tudor Colchester, a town that was to acquire a strongly Protestant reputation, the Marian burnings of heretics, more extensive here than in any other town outside of London, seem to have helped tip the balance against Catholicism. A case study of Halifax provided an opportunity to test the thesis that textile areas provided a favorable environment for Protestantism. The joint authors conclude that the cloth trade had only a marginal influence on the
town’s religious transition and that it was the acquiring of an educated and extremely effective preacher that was the crucial factor. Worcester (another cloth-manufacturing town) was subjected to swift Reformation from above, directed by activist clergy. Protestantism came very slowly to Tewkesbury, whose civic leaders were divided and favorers of Catholicism dominant, until the early 1570s. Two final essays focus on a changing culture, with towns and markets playing important roles. All of the essays have interesting things to say, and several are very useful indeed. But most of them are micro-studies narrowly focused on their chosen towns and demonstrating little need to relate them to wider concerns. It is not enough to draw together a number of able and even distinguished contributors without some clear guidelines on how the theme is to be addressed, and the volume cries out for an overview. Ironically, the excellent annotated bibliographies submitted by each contributor demonstrate what is possible in terms of a productive historiographical debate about the Reformation and English towns. However, it is an opportunity missed, and the general introduction to the essays provides too few pointers to the direction in which discussion needs to go.

The four books reviewed here demonstrate the health and vitality of the study of towns in the early modern period. Urban history, once regarded as peripheral to what should be the historian’s main preoccupations, has now established itself at the very center. Its very range and variety will continue to serve as a stimulus to academic debate for many years to come. There is reason to celebrate.

—Keith Lindley
University of Ulster

NOTES

CONTRIBUTORS

NICHOLAS BLOOM lives in New Orleans, teaches at Tulane, and received his Ph.D. from Brandeis. His first book, Suburban Alchemy: 1960s New Towns and the Transformation of the American Dream, was published in 2001 as part of the Urban Life and Urban Landscape Series from Ohio State University Press.

DAVID L. A. GORDON is an associate professor in the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University in Canada. His current research is on the planning history of Canada’s national capital and waterfront redevelopment in London and New York. His book, Battery Park City: Politics and Planning on the New York Waterfront, was published in 1998.

MADELEINE HURD did her Ph.D. at Harvard University and subsequently taught at the University of Pittsburgh before assuming her current position. She has published Public Spheres, Public Mores, and Democracy in Hamburg and Stockholm, 1870-1914 (2000) and is currently working on the links between urban identity, masculinity, and ethnicity in the Free City of Danzig.

DAVID IGLER is an assistant professor of history at the University of Utah. His book Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920 was published in spring 2001.

GERRY KEARNS is a lecturer in geography at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. He works on nineteenth-century urban demography and public health.

WILLIAM H. LECKIE, JR. is an independent scholar and freelance writer. His major fields of concern are social and cultural history and theory. He is currently completing a book on urban planning in early-twentieth-century St. Louis, Missouri.


DAVID STRADLING is an assistant professor of history at the University of Cincinnati, where he teaches urban and environmental history. He is the author of Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalist, Engineers and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951 (1999) and other articles on the history of smoke control. His current research concerns the long relationship between New York City and the Catskill Mountains.
Call for Proposals or Papers

Largely as a result of the emergence of ASLE and ISLE, there has been, in recent years, a vital and important discussion of environmental issues, especially as these pertain to literature. One of the central themes in this discussion has been the meaning and significance of place, especially landscape—and rightly so. Much of contemporary life rewards moving up, moving out, moving on. As Gary Snyder wrote, “you’re penalized now if you try and stay in one spot . . . long enough to be able to say, ‘I really love and know this place’” (Place 19).

But, as the discussion of place has developed over recent years, there has been a noticeable lack of interest in the meanings of homes, buildings, ruins, and other human structures that assume an identity along with and in relation to the landscape. We are proposing a collection of pieces that will help remedy this deficiency. We are looking for essays, articles, or creative nonfiction that meditate on and help clarify the significance and meaning of human structures. Here are some papers that have already been proposed:

- Live the Life You Have Imagined: The Houses of Environmental Writers
- Cabins in American Nature Writing
- Ruins in an Empty Landscape
- Ghost Towns and Abandoned Houses

We seek nonfiction pieces that illuminate some aspect of buildings, particularly dwellings, and their relationship to culture, politics, the environment, gender, rhetorical power, or some other important aspect of cultural studies.

Please send papers, abstracts, or polished proposals (2-3 pages) to Peter Quigley (Peter_Quigley@ccmail.pr.erau.edu) and Brian Nerney (Brian.Nerney@metrostate.edu). Place proposal in the message or attach in rich text format (RTF). Deadline: January 1, 2002.