

world, was not a division, as Conn argues, between presumed permanence and transience but a division between the literate and the preliterate worlds of mankind. It seems that the dividing point was *textuality*—the ability to leave a record, to explain oneself to posterity.

How, then, can we explain the fate of museums in this period of American history? What, if any, is the relationship between this cultural form and larger intellectual currents? There is no question that the positivist, “factual” temperament in post-Civil War America, as David Shi has convincingly shown, colored the cultural landscape of the Gilded Age, and beyond.<sup>1</sup> But epistemology is not the issue here. Rather, the nineteenth-century museum as a cultural creation must be seen as a fundamentally conservative, socializing institution. The approach to knowledge that grew within its walls was inherently preservative, not exploratory; celebratory, not critical; and inward-gathering, not outward-looking. Boas’s revolt, after the turn of the century, against the directions of museum anthropology had less to do with the limitations of objects-as-knowledge than with the patron-driven exigencies that distorted the processes of scientific anthropology as he envisioned them. In the end, the golden age of museums passed not because of epistemological change but because new, more vibrant institutional forms promised to create the knowledge required for twentieth-century power projection.

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**Henry C. Matthews.** *Kirtland Cutter: Architect in the Land of Promise*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998. x + 448 pp.; 265 illustrations, bibliography, index. \$60.00.

*Kirtland Cutter: Architect in the Land of Promise* is among the newest and heftiest examples of a genre that has dominated the historiography of American architecture for decades. The monograph focusing on the work of an architect has long captured the interest of scholars and their audiences alike. Outside of pattern and plan books, some of the earliest texts in the field are the still-informative and engaging biographies of Henry Hobson Richardson (1888) and John

Wellborn Root (1896). During the early twentieth century, these were followed by others that were likewise tributes to major figures—Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim—whose careers seemed unduly abbreviated by death.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrently, the scope began to broaden with Fiske Kimball’s pioneering study of Thomas Jefferson as a shaper of architecture in the early republic. In the 1930s, more in-depth examinations were published of somewhat later pioneers, Robert Mills and Richard Upjohn. Hugh Morrison sought to resurrect the reputation of Louis Sullivan, who had died a decade before in near obscurity, with his 1935 detailed study. Henry-Russell Hitchcock also set new parameters in his meticulous work on Frank Lloyd Wright, who was still very much in active practice when it was released in 1942. The hero-worshipping of architects that became widespread by the mid twentieth century no doubt fostered the tendency to examine the past through the output of individuals, but it also set a high standard for those so honored. As late as 1983, Leland M. Roth felt the need to justify producing a sizable monograph on McKim, Mead and White, as if that firm’s extraordinary contribution to the field might be questioned by some scholars.<sup>2</sup>

Even before the 1980s, the monograph format was proliferating, and it has continued to the point that few major figures have yet to be the subject of at least one such volume. Most of these books focus on the work itself, and many of them are more descriptive than analytical. A reader learns the basic facts of the architect’s career and perhaps something about his or her clients and community as well as a host of other related concerns, but the designs themselves receive top billing. Biographies that integrate a study of the individual with his or her work, such as Franz

<sup>1</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1888); Harriet Monroe, *John Wellborn Root, Architect* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1896); Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921); and Charles Moore, *The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

<sup>2</sup> Fiske Kimball, *Thomas Jefferson, Architect* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1916); H. M. P. Gallagher, *Robert Mills, Architect of the Washington Monument, 1781–1855* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935); Everard M. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn, Architect and Churchman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939); Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1935); Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887–1941* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1942); Leland M. Roth, *McKim, Mead and White, Architects* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), pp. xix–xx.

<sup>1</sup> David Shi, *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Schultze's of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, are rare. Likewise, the approach developed by Robert Bruegmann for examining a large commercial firm, Holabird and Roche, encompassing business, technical, programmatic, and urban considerations, is very much the exception.<sup>3</sup>

Henry Matthews's monograph on Kirtland Cutter falls well within the mainstream of the genre. The author has devoted countless hours over many years to gathering material on his subject from newspapers, architectural journals, archival collections, and many other sources. He has traveled across the country, examining the work itself. He has produced a voluminous record with a detailed text that is copiously illustrated. Great care has been exercised along the way to produce an insightful as well as readable account of the scores of buildings described. Matthews is also concerned with identifying important sources for Cutter's ideas, although he tends to rely on historical studies more than on publications of the period for comparisons and is sometimes too eager in postulating where Cutter could have gained inspiration.

Unlike Ralph Adams Cram, John Russell Pope, or George Post—each the subject of a recent study—Cutter is not widely known among historians and others interested in architecture. Long idolized by residents of Spokane, Washington, the city where he practiced for most of his career, and admired by specialists of architecture in the northwestern United States, he never attained national stature. Cutter is also unlike S. Charles Lee, who enjoyed only a limited reputation while in practice, primarily within the motion picture industry, but whose work is so ingenious that it has now gained widespread attention.<sup>4</sup> Matthews's meticulous coverage reveals that with few exceptions, Cutter's work was of a thoroughly conventional sort, always keeping

abreast of changes in architectural taste throughout his long career.

A generation ago Cutter would have been dismissed by historians as a strictly "local" figure, unworthy of detailed investigation. Our perspective may be different today, not because Cutter is in some way extraordinary but rather because he is representative. Cutter is one of a number of architects who, during the early twentieth century, became major forces in shaping their respective communities. While he designed a large number of houses for Spokane's business elite, Cutter also worked with many other building types, including hotels, office blocks, railroad stations, stores, clubs, churches, power plants, restaurants, and bridges. He also appears to have been a standard-bearer locally in terms of the polish and sometimes the vivaciousness he gave to his designs. If Spokane had not gotten Cutter, it might have become home to someone of comparable talents, but even if it had, things would not have been the same. By the early 1920s, when he left for southern California, Cutter had made a distinct and substantial imprint on his city.

The fact that Cutter was not alone in this respect—that other places likewise benefited from their own architects of talent and distinction in the early twentieth century and no doubt in other periods as well—makes him an instructive case study. Cutter's story is all the more interesting because of his particular circumstances. When Cutter arrived in 1886, Spokane was a small, provincial outpost. He had no professional training in architecture but soon managed to establish himself in practice, attract associates whose abilities complemented his, and secure some prestigious commissions. Riding out the depression of the 1890s, he positioned himself to capitalize on the subsequent building boom (Spokane's population soared from 36,000 in 1900 to 104,000 ten years later). His substantial practice failed to yield the expected return, however, and by the end of the next decade, he was seriously in debt. Precarious finances combined with a stagnant economy (Spokane had no population growth in the 1910s) led Cutter, then sixty-three, to relocate to Los Angeles County, California, where he continued to work until shortly before his death sixteen years later. For all his achievements, Cutter's career was marked as much by struggle as it was by success.

Throughout his lengthy text, Matthews affords many details of the architect's rise and later difficulties, but he offers this biographical informa-

<sup>3</sup> Franz Schultze, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Franz Schultze, *Philip Johnson: Life and Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Robert Bruegmann, *The Architects and the City: Holabird and Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia, 1881-1900*, vol. 1 of *Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Steven McLeod Bedford, *John Russell Pope: Architect of Empire* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998); Sarah Bradford Landau, *George B. Post, Architect: Picturesque Designer and Determined Realist* (New York: Monacelli, 1998); Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

tion more as an introduction to the work than as a primary focus. It is obvious that Cutter was known and respected by the business leaders who sought his services, sometimes repeatedly, but it is unclear whether he entered their world socially (as Richardson did in Boston) or was merely a provider of fashionable plans. Thumbing through the pages, Cutter's extensive impact on turn-of-the-century Spokane is driven home, but the urban context of that contribution is never explored. Spokane's salient physical characteristics and the ways in which Cutter helped shape them, either directly through his buildings or indirectly through influencing others, is never addressed. Did Cutter have the largest or the most prestigious practice in the city? What was his competition like, and how did it change between the mid-1880s and early 1920s? Was Cutter's plight at the end of this period due in part to the arrival of others who positioned themselves to secure work that previously would have gone to him? Little is presented upon which to draw any conclusions.

Cutter's work itself, to which so much of the text is devoted, displays a high level of competence and will interest anyone concerned with architecture of the period. Still, it falls short of the inventiveness of, say, the Greene brothers or Bernard Maybeck or the formal sophistication of Arthur Brown, to name three western colleagues practicing at more or less the same time. Yet there are a number of examples that warrant scrutiny, perhaps more than they are accorded, such as the C. D. Stimson house in Seattle (1913-14) or the Swan Lake Camp in western Montana (1919-20). The Seattle Golf and Country Club (1908-9) is the most ambitious, and arguably most engaging, example of Cutter's propensity for drawing inspiration from the Swiss chalet, but one is never certain why he was so attached to this source. Then there are the fantasy-laden restaurant and hotel interiors Cutter designed for Louis Davenport. Here, especially, more programmatic analysis of the early twentieth-century hotel would have helped to place seeming indulgences into a firmer perspective.

Those with a special interest in Spokane and the state of Washington will embrace this book. Putting Cutter in the limelight will also, no doubt, help protect and even restore some of his oeuvre. Collectively, this monograph and others of its kind add to our overall knowledge of American architecture, but they leave many issues open. It is perhaps time to ask how this genre of inquiry

may better address matters of broader intellectual concern.

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**Mary S. Hoffschwelle.** *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998. 233 pp.; 26 illustrations, bibliography, index. \$32.00.

The link between the politics of reform and the culture of space is the topic of Mary S. Hoffschwelle's *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930*, a study of progressive-era educational and domestic reform in Tennessee. Hoffschwelle identifies home and school building reform as central to rural progressives' vision of a clean and just society. According to the author, progressive reformers saw "the school as the bridge to the rural home," and the condition of that home was itself "the linchpin of an improved country life" (p. 7). Home economists, health reformers, rural educators, and school architects joined in a systemic initiative to modernize and improve the rural communities of the state literally from the ground up.

*Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community* is, first and foremost, a study of reform visions and initiatives: Why did rural progressive reformers zero in on the school and the home as the sources of social backwardness, and how did the way in which they designed their solutions ultimately fail? The main themes of the book include conflicts between local and state agencies and between traditional and professional values; the roles of gender, race, and class in mediating progressive programs for rural reform; and the way in which reformers viewed the material environment as central to their projects. Hoffschwelle follows these themes as they appeared in reform initiatives in six different counties across the state of Tennessee.

The author tries to reach beyond the mere rhetoric of reformers and focus on the more complicated issue of community response. Her main point is that over time progressive reformers' tactics shifted from a focus on broad-based structural reform by state agencies to more specific initiatives led by professional organizations. Progressives in Tennessee changed their empha-