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Barth, Gunther. *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. viii, 289 pp. Illustrations, notes, sources and index. \$27.95 (Canadian) \$19-95 (U.S.)

Keith Cassidy

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written and graphic form. The model, of “circular and cumulative growth feedbacks,” is not expressed in a way that allows it to be reduced to a limited number of clearly articulated statements which could be explicitly evaluated or refined in light of the evidence and by recourse to specific analytical procedures. It is a more useful device for organizing a presentation than for assessing the evidence.

In his book Pred shows his imaginative grasp of historical conditions which occupied several centuries and continents. The scale at which he works and the evidence he brings to light serve to set his work apart from that of most of his contemporaries. His contribution is in a grand structural design and in an acute eye for detail.

Peter G. Goheen
Department of Geography
Queen’s University

Barth, Gunther. *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. viii, 289 pp. Illustrations, notes, sources and index. \$27.95 (Canadian) \$19.95 (U.S.).

This is a novel, colourful, and largely persuasive view of the modern city, based on an impressively large and imaginative collection of primary sources. Barth begins by emphasizing the contrasts, diversity and conflicts of the American city, arising from such forces as ethnicity, economic inequality, age, race and the freedom of American life which “allowed great numbers of people to live as individuals more fully than before” (page 16). This stood in marked contrast, he argues, with European cities which never experienced the same kind of heterogeneity: the American poor never became a uniform proletariat, and they “cared enough for the opportunities in their new surroundings to prefer the promises of a free life to any call for solidarity” (page 22). These themes recur throughout the book: a belief in American exceptionalism and a celebration of the freedom and diversity which he believes constitutes the essence of that distinctive experience.

This city of contrasts required a new culture to provide “a common urban identity that also left enough room for each individual’s dreams and aspirations” (page 229). Five institutions were crucial in shaping this new culture: the apartment building, the metropolitan press, the department store, the baseball park, and the vaudeville house. Examining each in turn, Barth demonstrates their contributions to a culture which had reached maturity by the early years of the twentieth century when, he claims, the “modern city” began to be destroyed by the automobile.

His treatment of the apartment building is part of a larger discussion of urban space in which he reviews the layout of streets and lots, architecture, the park movement, and public transportation. This is in some ways one of his more disappointing chapters, for he tries to cover too much and fails to integrate his material adequately. Nevertheless his remarks about the function of the apartment are intelligent and insightful. Departing from the Parisian models which originally inspired American builders, apartments did not contain a mix of social classes, but rather housed distinct groups, “because the social flux that attracted people of different origin also prevented easy contact between various groups” (page 47). Apartments solved the problem of finding accommodation for a family in cities where the single dwelling was not economically feasible for more than a few. They also accustomed people to the vertical dimension of the city, as well as to the advantage of such new technology as steam heat and electric lights.

The metropolitan press emerges as one of the most significant institutions of the nineteenth-century urban world. In a series of brilliant insights Barth demonstrates how it “helped to make diversity comprehensible and acceptable” (page 106) and ultimately fostered a “growing cosmopolitanism” (page 107). It also helped create a distinctly urban way of speaking and thinking, and paradoxically, by encouraging a respect for people’s differences, encouraged greater uniformity of behaviour.

Although the department store could be found in Europe, it was in America that it first acquired a number of important characteristics, especially its openness to women from a range of classes and its conversion of downtown into a shopping area. It also shaped the lives of the women who shopped and worked in it, granting them an escape from the isolation of domesticity at the same time that it subjected them to the servitude of “shopping as a social obligation” (page 145). It gave urban life “charm and civility” (page 147) and like the metropolitan press helped to overcome the divisions of modern city life by forging new links among unlike people.

The ball park also played a crucial role in the city, giving rootless people a sense of belonging and teaching them the meaning of competition within rules. The final institution which he treats is the vaudeville house from which the audience emerged “as city people – urban men and women on the point of acquiring social skills and sharing cultural values that enabled them to cope with the complexities of modern city life” (page 228). The tempo, songs, language, and dress of vaudeville spread out onto the city streets and acted as significant elements in shaping the short-lived culture of the modern city.

It is precisely this contention – that the appearance of the automobile marked the end of the modern city –

which is one of weakest in the book. Obviously profound changes occurred in urban culture, but the element of continuity is surely greater than Barth allows.

A striking feature of this work is the author's obvious fascination with the often odd and colourful details of urban life. This sometimes leads to digressions from his main themes, a practice which, while occasionally annoying, is also the source of some of the book's appeal. It is, in addition, a manifestation of Barth's obvious love of the city and its culture. Appropriately the book ends with a ringing affirmation of faith in "the ability of the urban setting to create satisfying forms of human life" (page 234).

Not everyone will like this book, nor its positive view of America and the urban culture created there. Nonetheless it adds significantly to the professional literature and should serve admirably to awaken students to an appreciation of the vigour and variety of the subject.

Keith Cassidy
Department of History
University of Guelph

Bahan, Rayner, *et al.* *Buffalo Architecture: A Guide*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981. xiii, 336 pp. Photographs and maps. \$9.95 (U.S.).

The last twenty or more years have been harsh ones for Buffalo, as discouraging as the winter winds blowing off Lake Erie. Future buffeting promises to be just as cold and relentless. In 1940, the city's population accounted for sixty per cent of the residents in the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area; in 1980 the proportion had collapsed to thirty per cent. Major building projects have been rare since at least 1940, and the relatively recent crises in the American automotive and steel industries have struck hard at the region's largest employers, General Motors and United States Steel. In the border communities of Ontario's Niagara Peninsula, Buffalo no longer exercises the attraction that it once did. The city's core was a commercial and entertainment Mecca, an alternative to Hamilton and even Toronto. The statutory forty-eight hour stay (often faked) to buy duty free cottons at A M and A's Department Store, a movie at the 3,000 seat Shea's Theatre, a concert at Kleinhans Music Hall (designed by Eliel and Eero Saarinen), and dinner at Old Spain began to vanish as Canadian links with the heart of the city around 1960. The suburban shopping malls continued to attract Ontario Niagara-frontier consumers, but until publication of *Buffalo Architecture: A Guide* it was difficult to convince anyone of the centre city's existence let alone its grandeur. Ironically, a long and deepening stagnation has helped to

preserve a remarkable architectural heritage. Within a few blocks of each other in the CBD stand the graceful Guaranty Building (1895-96) by Louis Sullivan, and Ellicott Square Building (1895-96) by Daniel Burnham, a rival to his famous Chicago Rookery. Both are classic representative works of the "Chicago School of Architecture." In fact, many of the great American architects active between 1870 and 1940 had executed Buffalo commissions: H.H. Richardson; the firm of McKim, Mead and White; Frank Lloyd Wright; Albert Kahn.

The city's historic position as a western gateway (Wells Fargo Express and the Grain Elevator originated in the city) as well as its situation as an Erie Canal centre appear to have made it open to both Chicago and New York architectural influences. One of the flaws with the guidebook is that it does not consider analytical possibilities such as the cultural position of Buffalo in the diffusion of styles. Another theme that stands out but requires more context concerns the compact period of Art Deco design which provided Buffalo with a distinctive skyline and prize examples of the style. The City Hall, the New York Central Terminal, the Courier-Express Building, the Vars Building, and the Pierce-Arrow Showroom (the classic auto was built in Buffalo) were all constructed from 1929 to 1930 with plans by different architectural firms. The Art Deco style also swept the neighbouring city of Niagara Falls. These observations beg for an explanation. Similarly obscure is the commitment of one family (a Buffalo Medici?) to architectural innovation. The Martins, associated with the Buffalo-based Larkin Company (whose product line is never described), commissioned two of the five Frank Lloyd Wright houses in Buffalo. Darwin Martin, Sr. commissioned Wright to plan the Larkin Administration Building (1904-06). It was "almost certainly the first 'front office' building in North America, it emphasized the new power of management, its separation from the processes of manufacture." Darwin Martin, Jr. commissioned the luxurious West Ferry Apartments (1929) with its two level units, fireplaces, and terraces. Conceivably the guidebook will inspire more detailed scholarly work on these several peculiarities of Buffalo's architectural history. The creation of an architectural museum is a laudable start.

As a guidebook, the volume is a credit to the many contributors and to the MIT Press whose commitment to architectural history has produced a long line of excellent volumes in a more costly and less accessible form. In size, format, use of maps, and objectives, *Buffalo Architecture* is comparable to Ira J. Bach's *Chicago's Famous Buildings* or Harold Kalman's *Exploring Vancouver*. Many individuals contributed to the text, including Henry-Russell Hitchcock who in 1940 mounted an exhibition at Buffalo's notable Albright Art Gallery on the city's architecture. Hitchcock's association with the city's heritage is another measure of its importance to American material culture,