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Gregory C. Randall. *America's Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois*. Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp. xvii, 236. Maps, black and white illustrations, bibliography, index. US\$42.50

Geoffrey S. Smith

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Gregory C. Randall. *America's Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois. Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp. xvii, 236. Maps, black and white illustrations, bibliography, index. US\$42.50.*

The cost of Gregory C. Randall's volume (especially north of the 49th parallel) is more than many GIs returning from battle put down for housing under that wonderful contribution to American growth after the Second World War, the GI Bill. A planner and landscape architect, Randall offers here a wide-ranging personal and professional assessment of everything one wanted to know but feared asking about Park Forest, Illinois, the first of myriad postwar American suburban developments. The author's story possesses intrinsic interest – it reflects his lifelong connection with the region, beginning as a resident at age five – an interest that burgeoned with the passing of time. Randall makes an empathic, yet dispassionate observer, and his assessment supplements and modifies William H. Whyte's iconic *The Organization Man* (1956).

Less well known than Levittown New York, the national metaphor for the emerging crabgrass frontier, Park Forest encompassed all the promise and problems of a new way of living. Under the auspices of American Community Builders, and led by local visionary developer-entrepreneurs Philip Klutznik and Elbert Peets, the town emerged as a publicly managed and privately built community twenty-six miles south of Chicago. From its inception the founders of Park Forest sought to apply lessons gleaned from New Deal greenbelt villages and English garden cities as they planned, designed, built, and supervised its growth.

Critics of suburbia, taking their cue from academics and city folk like Lewis Mumford and Malvina Reynolds, often harp on the negative, scorning the suburbanites' homogeneity, conservatism, boosterism, and lack of concern for declining urban centres. According to this narrative, suburbia valued only clipped lawns, fresh paint, and bigger and better flagstone walks. Randall's assessment reveals much self-interested Babbity, but the author also delves beneath self-interest and snobbery as he limns a story remarkable in its complexity and its legacy. For not only did Park Forest become the first new kid on the block; the venue also exerted significant impact upon community planning in the United States generally.

Randall assays the history of space, of place and "place," of continuity, and of change over time. In so doing, he contributes to a vital new historiography, combining a post-modern temperament with hard historical questions. More than a history of the planning, construction, and residential life of a GI town – Canadian demobilization towns like Barriefield Village across the Cataraqui River from Kingston were primitive by comparison – Randall argues that Park Forest was far more than an amalgam of sticks and stones. In ten fast-moving chapters and an epilogue, he tells the story of the builders' foresight (and, at times, cupidity); the pioneer arrivals and subsequent dwellers in the village's single-family homes, and their triumphs and trials (several basement drywalls proved permeable); battles over (and for) schools, a shopping centre, and growth generally; and what

happened when other suburbs burgeoned, especially those that featured malls.

The saga of Park Forest is at once poignant and instructive. Most suburban developments – and there were thousands in 1950s and 1960s America that featured impossible names (Elmwood, Streamwood, Dreamwood, Driftwood, Happywood) that promised bucolic lives as part of the purchase – never lived up to this promise. But no matter. Randall demonstrates beyond cavil that dynamic new towns like Park Forest often pushed surrounding regions forward. The trick was to maintain the verve. The author finds significant impediments to continued development within the cultural matrix of these new sites – racist restrictive covenants, economic snobbery, the tendency to embrace the political status quo, and – most interesting – the existence of these developments as a threat to existing community property values. Withal, however, the author leaves no doubt of the complexity – increasingly so in the last two decades – of community planning. For those skeptics who decry the value of a liberal arts education as the republic moves into the twenty-first century, understanding this story – and community planning generally – involves history, sociology, psychology, economics, art, and several other fields. Arts and science courses may, in fact, save us from ourselves.

Think about it.

Geoffrey S. Smith
Department of History
Queen's University

Clemens Wischermann and Elliott Shore, eds. *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives. Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2000. Pp. xviii, 225. Illustrations, bibliography, index.*

This collection of essays reconsiders the relationship between modern advertising and urban consumption. The focus is on the period 1850–1930 when, the editors suggest, early advertising strategies crystallized. At the outset the collection makes use of recent advances in communications theory in order to place the consumer of advertising, rather than the advertiser, at the heart of the investigations. This emphasis reflects the editors' conclusion that old studies of advertising are now discredited because they accepted the "grand manipulator" argument, suggested by theorists such as Vance Packard in the 1950s, which assumed that advertising actually influenced behaviour. This collection is based on more recent theoretical work from the social sciences that, according to Wischermann, recognizes that the consumer of advertising filters and reconfigures information. In other words, advertising can only reinforce existing behavioural dispositions. Advertising is not misleading, but a tool to make the market comprehensible to consumers. With this as the central assumption, the authors reinsert advertising into the historical context from which the theories of manipulation have removed it and provide a model of how the history of advertising might be studied.