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

John C. Weaver

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which is one of the 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.

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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,

for he is a stellar figure in the field. Hitchcock and Philip Johnson had helped to import modernism to the United States through their 1932 book, *The International Style*.

Like other guidebooks, this one would have benefitted from a juxtaposition of original and current photographs or, at least, a citation of the dates and auspices of the photographs reproduced in the volume. A few are "publicity shots." Information about illustrations would have done more than satisfy curiosity. It would have allayed surprise when users of the guide compared photographs with the current status of buildings. Gems and their settings appear differently in a polished catalogue than they do through physical contact. While the book concentrates on major structures, it is important to mention that the guide is not at all snobbish; it includes modest domestic dwellings, street-scapes, and ethnic neighbourhoods. An essay on Buffalo parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted reminds us of his breadth of activity and genius, as well as the willingness of urban governments in later eras to sacrifice their green spaces for expressways and other non-recreational purposes.

The contributors certainly have achieved their primary objective of making "it impossible, ever again, for anyone who cares about architecture to say, 'we drove through Buffalo on the Thruway, but decided not to stop because there's nothing there to look at – is there?'" Buffalo deserves to be known for past aesthetic achievements and not just as the home of Millard Fillmore, Coffee Rich, the Buffalo Sabres, and the site of William McKinley's assassination. The absence of economic pressures on the CBD seems to have enabled Buffalo to survive as a living museum of architecture as practised before "the Crash." Of course, there is more to the city's architectural situation than this generally sound observation on survival allows. The Buffalo story of preservation is a complex one. Buffalo has lost a number of noteworthy structures and these are described in the chapter "Lost Buffalo." On the other hand, several buildings – Shea's Theatre and the Guaranty Building – have been saved and restored by civic-spirited action. Perhaps the guidebook will make future preservation a more popular cause; perhaps, too, the book is one of several recent but unconvincing signs that (in the lyrics of a new booster jingle) "Buffalo is walking proud, walking proud." So much of every quality of American material, cultural, and social life has a Buffalo association that it is tempting to see this city as metaphor. *Sic transit gloria mundi?*

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James Bater has accomplished a skilful and much-needed job in assembling and interpreting the available literature on the Soviet city, in both English and Russian, into a coherent portrait. This literature is considerable, but, as Bater points out, spotty. Particular shortages exist in the areas of intraurban studies, either of integrated character or with a geographic emphasis. Urban historical work, particularly on cities other than the largest, is also in limited supply. In spite of such gaps, Bater has produced a readable survey of the Soviet urban condition which should be of value both as background for the serious researcher and as instructive reading for university students.

The book is organized around an assessment of the level of successful translation of Soviet planning ideals and principles into tangible reality. Within this broad perspective, five themes are selected for examination: (1) the importance of continuity and historical momentum in urban development; (2) the framework for, and process of, decision-making as it affects town planning; (3) the tempo and pattern of city growth at the national scale; (4) the spatial organization of the Soviet city; and (5) the Soviet city as a place to live.

These themes are reflected in the chapter organization, with some modification. The first theme is subsumed in a chapter titled "Ideology in the City," while a concluding chapter is titled "The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality." The chapters are of a reasonable and digestible length, while the maps which illustrate the text are, for the most part, of fair quality and intelligibility, though some suffer from excessively small lettering and others from poor reproduction.

Bater tackles some of the fundamental issues which confront any student of Soviet cities. Among these are the degree of continuity or change from pre-Soviet times to the present; the similarities and differences between Soviet and Western cities, that is, between the city of the planned economy and society and the more market-oriented west; and the levels of correspondence between planning ideal and built and functioning reality. This last issue runs throughout the book.

Chapter Two, "Ideology and the City," provides background on the state of the city, and of urban planning, in the nineteenth century. The rapid growth of urban populations through in-migration and the intolerable burden this put upon city management is rapidly chronicled, as are early town planning principles. Particularly interesting is the influence of European models, particularly Ebenezer Howard's garden city, upon Russian planning philosophy. Although Soviet planners charted a distinctive development course for the city, Bater draws a number of parallels between pre- and post-Soviet situations. Among the most striking of these is the notion that planned urbanization of both eras demanded tight control

Bater, James H. *The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality*. Explorations in Urban Analysis. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980. xii, 196 pp. Tables, figures, maps. \$8.95 (U.S.).