
Christopher Robert Reed
Cleary (1863-1905) and Clara Laughlin (1873-1941) were writers whose magazine short stories also stressed the experiences of "common" Irishmen in the New World. Perhaps the most prolific of Chicago's Irish Literatimes was James T. Farrell (1904-79). Farrell's Washington Park novels keenly balanced culture, ethnic space, and time. Fanning notes that "his sympathetic portrayal of Chicago Irish working-and middle-class families established him as a pioneer in the field of urban ethnic literature." All four of these writers stressed the themes of working-class heroism, dignity amid poverty, and second-generation community disintegration.

This book's ability to compare and contrast things Irish-American with those particularly Irish and Chicago is perhaps its greatest attribute. The Irish in this city were active politically and religiously, but in the beginning they were economically subordinated. Unlike their countrymen in some eastern cities, however, the Irish in Chicago, the authors hold, consciously sought and attained social mobility. Here some contradiction arises. No one examines, for example, how the "communal Catholicism" of this group intersected with individual quests for "middle-class respectability." If the Irish "were not rugged individualists," how did their advances in politics, athletics, and entertainment come about? At the end of this volume that question remains unresolved.

Finally, perhaps because the book signals "the end of an era," the authors seem too willing to view the Irish experience in Chicago in a somewhat Whiggish manner. "Irish-America is an urban ethic success story." The contributors tend to conceptualize this history in three phases: Irish community formation; second-generation "Americanization"; and, finally, "lace-curtain" social mobility. The Irish in Chicago provides a good summary of more than 150 years of Irish experience in an important American city.

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This volume is the first in a series of studies on the dynamics of economic development in major American cities since World War Two. The authors present a highly readable, analytical, incisive and usable text on how the leaders of Chicago's political economy directed the shape of urban development to the present time. This process began even before the political reign of Mayor Richard J. Daley in 1955 and has continued after his death. While the immense power of the economic forces as illustrated through the interests of the banks, the giant retail houses of Field's, Carson's and Sears, the realty associations and the industries such as USX and AMOCO have held sway for over three decades, a new movement is underway which has already seriously challenged their domination over the city's future. The convergence of interests of a new populist, political wave led by blacks and which culminated in the political victory of Harold Washington in 1983 and the populist, neighbourhood thrust of white ethnics and Hispanics has presented the formidable forces that heretofore controlled the political economy with an alternative agenda. In the post-war years, the growth ideology promoted by business interests held centre stage, controlling access to information. Since 1983, the open, responsive city government that is emerging has provided neighbourhood interests with an opportunity to shift economic investment away from the business districts to the city's Loop and neighbourhoods.

The problems of a public policy that focused only on market growth in the center of the city included misguided diagnoses that the decline in industrialization was caused by high taxes, government regulations, high wages demanded by unions and welfare costs while overlooking the drain that avaricious corporate actions produced. One such example is USX's disinvestment that resulted in large scale unemployment with its attendant ills of loss of self-esteem, financial deprivation, family breakups, and neighbourhood disruption. Also, ignoring or accepting as inevitable certain social problems such as unemployment, crime and undereducation merely exacerbated social disruption. For over three decades, business growth in the corporate sector when coupled with political inaction on pressing social issues diminished the quality of life for those in the lower quarter of Chicago's social structure. Most important, the alternatives that allowed for an economic growth that complemented social progress were deliberately overlooked. Quoting economist Robert Reich of Harvard, "a social organization premised on equity, security, and participation will generate greater productivity than one premised on greed and fear."

The answer from Chicago's neighbourhood organizations to the challenge from corporate-municipal greed has come from citizen groups that to a remarkable extent are overcoming racial and ethnic differences to achieve some successes in eliminating "redlining," which restricted mortgages, home improvement loans and insurance, as well as in promoting crime prevention and control. Reinvestment is beginning to follow lines that stimulate rather than stymie citizens in their quest for a better life. The municipal leadership offered by Harold Washington before his untimely death in November 1987 was steering the city in a direction that challenged the partnership of self-interest
that the Daley years had nurtured. Some of
the optimism that buoyed the authors in the
writing of this study will undoubtedly be
challenged by the new shape of municipal
government after 1988 as the Washington
revolution in participatory democracy
undergoes new strains.

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Huxtable, Ada Louise. Goodbye History,
Hello Hamburger: An Anthology of
Architectural Delights and Disasters.
Washington, D.C.: The Preservation
Press, 1986. Pp. 206. Index, black and
white photographs. $14.95 (U.S.).

On 21 March 1971, Ada Louise Huxtable, the
renowned architecture critic, wrote an article
History, Hello Hamburger”. The focus of this
article was the destruction of Mapleside, a
stately century-old home in Madison,
Wisconsin, and its replacement by a Burger
King restaurant. As Huxtable observed at the
time, “from historic home to ‘home of the
whooper’ with the swing of the wrecker’s
ball.”

The article gave its name to this anthology of
Huxtable’s writings which have been
reprinted by the National Trust for Historic
Preservation. The book should be a welcome
addition to everyone’s library since it
addresses issues which concern us all.
Written in engaging prose and well illustrated,
each chapter is a short essay in the on­
going development of the preservation field.
Recurring themes, such as the demolition of
buildings and their replacement by parking
lots or fast-food restaurants, or the
unsympathetic integration of old and new
buildings, have become commonplace in the
literature concerned with the urban
environment.

The irony is that these themes have not
changed much in the past 17 years. In fact,
Huxtable is a true pioneer who early
articulated these themes while she served as
The New York Times’ architecture critic from
1962 to 1973. Looking back at these articles
today, one is struck immediately by their
timelessness. On the one hand this is a real
tribute to Huxtable’s thought-provoking
essays, and on the other hand, a rather sad
observation that the battles of the sixties and
the seventies to save historic buildings and
neighbourhoods continue to rage at the end of
the eighties. Indeed there has been some
very real progress in changing the public
perception that “new is better,” and it is
because of critics like Huxtable that urban
issues are debated in the public realm. Her
desire to ensure harmony among the past,
present, and future, through the preservation
of older buildings and neighbourhoods, has
given her the conviction to speak out against
developers, architects, and governments,
while inspiring her readers to take a look
around and consider the state of the built
environment.

Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger contains
60 reprinted articles which have been
organized into seven thematic groups with
titles such as “How to Kill a City,” “Urban
Scenes and Schemes,” and “Where the Past
Meets the Future.” Unfortunately the entire
list of articles and their original date of
publication are only listed at the end of the
book so the reader is sometimes left
wondering where and when the articles first
appeared. In many cases, it is surprising how
long ago they first reached the pages of The
New York Times, and it would have been
nice to see these dates at the beginning of
each article. This would also serve to
reinforce their foresight.

Since most of these articles were written for
The New York Times, they focus to a certain
extent on the buildings of Manhattan or other
parts of the United States. Although for some
readers this may seem to be too narrow a
focus, it was in Manhattan that many
preservation initiatives emerged. Celebrated
landmarks such as Penn Station were lost;
court cases were fought, including the one
involving Grand Central Station; new
preservation techniques were initiated, such
as the transfer of development rights in order
to save the late 18th and early 19th-century
warehouses at South Street Seaport; and
one of America’s most extensive historic
district networks was developed. As a result,
during the past two decades, Manhattan has
served as the testing ground for these
preservation planning strategies and in turn
the city has provided the rest of the nation
with a myriad of preservation case-studies.
Indeed, a number of these strategies have
been adopted in Canadian cities.

One of this book’s most likable
characteristics is its readability. Huxtable is
an outstanding stylist whose witty and
perceptive remarks make this book a delight.
She also is an effective writer who provides
novices as well as serious scholars with
sufficient information to comprehend specific
aspects of a subject with which they might
not be familiar. In perhaps her most important
contribution to the preservation movement,
she has inspired millions of readers to open
their eyes, to learn from others about how to
save threatened buildings, to oppose the
construction of yet another row of faceless
skyscrapers, and to work collectively to
create better urban environments throughout
North America. As Huxtable herself writes in
the book’s afterword,

This is an extremely troubling and
uncertain time, but I would not swap it for
any other … there are many successes
and pleasures to celebrate as well, in new
and old buildings and in a burgeoning
sensibility to the built environment. I
measure success by the street corner.
My obsessions are now shared and my
cocoonspirators are everywhere.
Assuming survival, the battle for the future
is well joined. I’ll still be kicking buildings
for a while.