same groups also determined what would be remembered. In this new view what was most important about the past was Charleston’s role in the nation’s founding, not its dismemberment. Of course, the twentieth-century guardians of Charleston’s reputation still cared very much about discernment and refinement and employed access to, and knowledge about, Charleston’s good taste as cleverly as their ancestors had used their houses and the furnishings that filled them.

It is no surprise that this sometimes self-conscious process solidified the old elite’s claim to cultural and political authority. Nor is it surprising that the process was rife with ironies, inconsistencies, and hypocrisies. Susan Pringle Frost, the doyenne of the early historic preservation movement, decried changes made to her beloved city by the forces of what she called “grease and cheapness,” but then courted tourists who might become clients of her real-estate business. The Poetry Society and a community of artists—primarily watercolorists and etchers—created images of the city as an unhurried, genteel enclave of good taste. Other writers, novelists, and playwrights, most notably DuBose Heyward, represented Charleston as a bastion against the assault of modernization. And, like Heyward, the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, through its performances of African-American songs, celebrated a past in which there was a perceived racial harmony between grateful blacks and gracious whites.

The civic organizations and clubs that shaped what would be remembered and how it would be portrayed initially emerged from nostalgia for a prosperous past without social conflict. Ironically, it was precisely the city’s postbellum poverty that preserved its antebellum environment, which twentieth-century modernization and investment threatened to ruin. Nostalgic preservation efforts quickly became more self-conscious. The creation of what Yuhl calls the “legacy of memory,” a history over which elite whites claimed ownership, created a new source of class consensus through which advantaged white citizens connected themselves to an idealized past their grandparents had inhabited. Charleston’s privileged class found in this newly crafted civic memory a source of pride in themselves, their city, and their places in it.

It is of at least passing interest that the research McInnis pursued was enabled, in large part, by decisions made by the organizations that are the subject of Yuhl's study. One suspects that the process continues. No doubt the Charlestonians who eagerly opened their houses and their collections to McInnis subscribe to a more recently amended view of Charleston’s past. McInnis explores the past that Charlestonians prefer to remember, but by insisting that readers understand that the cost of Charleston’s graciousness was a system in which many lived miserably so that a few could live very well, she has presented an honest appraisal of both the price and the purposes of refinement. Yuhl, too, invites us to consider costs, those associated with the creation of an idealized memory. Together, these two books help unravel the complicated intentions embedded in the cycles of creation and remembrance that have shaped Charleston across two centuries.

CARTER L. HUDGINS
University of Mary Washington

Roberta Moudry, editor
The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories

Molly W. Berger, editor
The American Hotel

The editors of The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories and The American Hotel have compiled essays on two American building types at very different stages of historical inquiry. The skyscraper has received significant scholarly attention, including general histories and monographs on specific projects and figures. In contrast, the few serious works to date on the American hotel have been narrow in focus, namely Annabel Jane Wharton, Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture (Chicago, 2001), and Susan M. Braden, The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant (Gainesville and Tallahassee, 2002). Nevertheless, the two publications share an interdisciplinary approach to the time period 1870–1960, and together cast new light on the history of American architecture during this period.

The American Skyscraper, edited by Roberta Moudry, is divided into four major sections: Makers and Users, In the Image of the Client, Urban Contexts, and Popular Culture. In the first of these, Gail Fenske documents architect Cass Gilbert’s balancing of a small atelier-style office with the demands of designing and constructing skyscrapers. Gilbert’s success was due to his collaborations with engineers and contractors as well as the rigorous and hierarchical organization of his office. Keith D. Revell demonstrates how, prior to 1916, city officials could regulate buildings on health and safety issues but had no legal justification to regulate aesthetics. By promoting the healthful benefits of light and air and accepting the aesthetic possibilities of a vertical city, architect George Ford and others behind New York’s zoning ordinance created a law that, Revell believes, saved New York City from the worst features of tall buildings while permitting experimentation with great height and encouraging a unified urban effect. Lisa M. Fine’s essay on women office workers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries draws on movies, novels, trade magazines, and firsthand accounts. Fine creates a nuanced portrayal of female workers, acknowledging both the oppressive aspects of strictly managed, male-dominated places of employment and the empowerment that some women experienced through work and the establishment of housing, tea-
rooms, and cultural associations that catered to their needs.

The second section, In the Image of the Client, delves into the corporate and institutional histories behind skyscraper commissions. Both Moudry and Katherine Solomonson portray how companies—New York’s Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and Chicago’s Tribune Company, respectively—used their building’s architecture to position themselves as quasi-civic institutions. This occurred at pivotal moments in their history: Metropolitan Life built its tower (1907–9) after a statewide insurance scandal, and the Tribune held its building competition in 1922, during the Red Scare. Moudry acknowledges the regimented and socially segregated aspects of Metropolitan Life’s offices, yet the company, she establishes, also offered many benefits such as high pay, free lunch, and educational and cultural programs, and did not frown on office romances. Lacking any means of determining what the Tribune readers actually thought about the competition, Solomonson’s exploration of the company’s construction of a unified “imagined community” of diverse people positioned by the newspaper to share its values and cultural ideals is a useful way to explore what they may have believed.

Urban Contexts is the most uneven section of the book. Max Page reviews the Fifth Avenue Association’s involvement with the 1916 zoning ordinance and convincingly posits the concept of “creative destruction”—the continual tearing down and rebuilding of cities, with resulting tensions—as a more accurate way to understand urban history. Still, this is a history that has been well documented and Page’s essay does not substantially alter the received narrative. Sarah Watt’s essay juxtaposes the 1913 Paterson pageant in support of the striking silk millworkers of Paterson, New Jersey—held in Madison Square Garden—with its skyscraper neighbor, Metropolitan Life. Watt’s assessment of the marginalization of working-class culture forms an alternate understanding of urban space, but her claim that skyscrapers were implicated in the city’s class relations is less convincing than the interpretations of Fine or Moudry.

The section on popular cultures examines the meanings of skyscrapers as depicted in various forms of art. Antonello Frongia asserts in his essay that the abstracted photographs of the 1920s masked society’s inability to cope with massive immigration and the anarchy of the tenements. The shadows cast by skyscrapers and photographed by Alfred Stieglitz and his pictorialist circle indicate the absence or erasure of the other, particularly the tenement and its working-class inhabitants. Merrill Schleier studies the text, staging, and sets of Sophie Treadwell’s 1928 play Macbeth. The play presents in staccato scenes a young woman as office worker, wife, adulterer, and finally murderer, portraying a world in which scientific office management techniques and “skyscraperization” have invaded every aspect of life, with the high-rise embodying the oppression of women.

The American Skyscraper reinforces the existing architectural canon of buildings. Moudry acknowledges that certain significant events and buildings recur in skyscraper history—New York City’s Newspaper Row, the Woolworth Building, Madison Square, the 1916 Zoning Law, and the Chicago Tribune Tower competition. The American Skyscraper creates a systematic review of the meaning, experience, and relation of the skyscraper to the city and its people.

Molly W. Berger divides the essays comprising The American Hotel into three sections, on architects and developers, social and cultural histories, and innovative twentieth-century designers. Within the first section, Andrew S. Dolkart reviews four New York City apartment hotels of the 1920s and early 1930s by the architectural firm Schultz and Weaver. Schultz and Weaver mastered a combination of lavishly decorated public rooms orchestrated in relation to service spaces and circulation, a distinctive towered exterior profile that made buildings instantly recognizable, and well-planned guest suites. Next, Berger herself examines the affinities between New York City’s Gilded Age mansions and hotels as shared sites of technological development and continual redefinition of comfort and luxury. She convincingly demonstrates that hotels extended the lavish entertainments of private mansions to the middle class while maintaining the elite’s dominance. Lisa Davidson studies the pursuit of efficiency by early-twentieth-century chain hotel owners and architects, including entrepreneur E. M. Statler, whose standardization of hotel plans resulted in grouped elevators and uniform paired guest rooms with shared plumbing, and designers George B. Post and Sons, who used precise cost accounting and exploitation of the value of ground-floor retail space. These attempts ultimately resulted in a remarkably consistent building type that was fundamentally modern in its rationalized response to complex functional requirements.

In the section on social and cultural histories, Reiko Hillyer demonstrates that in St. Augustine, Florida’s strong confederate past was suppressed in favor of its more distant Spanish heritage to attract northern tourists after the Civil War. Tourism became so significant that it started to shape the city itself, resulting in new legislation to police behavior deemed off-putting to vacationers and the organization of civic pageants that reinforced the town’s Spanish past. Myra B. Young Armstead’s essay on early-twentieth-century African-American resorts is based on a close examination of photographs, the actual spaces, and travel literature. Armstead shows how African-American vacationers shared middle-class values—the domestication of nature, protection of women, and pride of property ownership—while creating places removed from the strict codes of behavior imposed by systematic racial discrimination. A. K. Sandoval-Strausz and Daniel Levinson Wilk analyze the change in popular depictions of the hotel clerk and chambermaid from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. During the Victorian era, the hotel clerk was caricatured as an intimidating figure eager to raise his social status, while the cham-
bermaid was depicted as a thieving source of contagion. These images mellowed during the twentieth century. Concerns with efficiency, in the case of hotel employees, resulted in better hiring, training, and supervisory practices, while movies depicted clerks and chambermaids as unthreatening and affable.

The third section examines the careers of modern American hotel designers William Price, Morris Lapidus, and Dorothy Draper. George E. Thomas and Susan Nigra Snyder stress the modernity of Price’s Traymore Hotel in Atlantic City (1906, 1912–15), in terms of its visual and spatial forms, interest in branding, and appeal to a more youthful, consumer crowd. Alice Friedman’s essay on Morris Lapidus and his 1950s and ’60s Miami Beach hotels establishes him as a pivotal figure in American architecture. Lapidus combined modernist forms with oversize theatrical embellishments and period touches, drawing on his knowledge of high modernism, Beaux-Arts design, and an alternate, popular American version of modernism that joined an abstracted architectural language with color, figural sculpture, and ornament. The disqualification of Lapidus’s work from serious consideration by architects and critics during the 1960s, Friedman believes, reveals the period’s anxiety about consumer culture and popular entertainment.

Mitchell Owens reviews Draper’s design career of 1925–61, highlighting her major hotel commissions and defining the key elements of her style. Though he analyzes aspects of her work, for instance, her use of Victoriana for its associations with comfort, he does not detail the importance of Draper’s marketing of herself, both to her clients and as a general icon of style.

The volume concludes with Bernard L. Jim’s account of the responses to the demolition, or “creative destruction,” of two iconic hotels: New York City’s Waldorf-Astoria and Cleveland’s Weddell House. Aware of the public’s attachment to the Waldorf-Astoria, developers sought to redirect it to the Empire State Building through several activities, including an auction of the hotel’s furniture and fixtures. Jim also believes that the demolition of the Waldorf prompted Clevelanders to reexamine their feelings about the earlier demolition of that city’s beloved Weddell Hotel, resulting in renewed examinations of its history.

In contrast to the canonical subject matter of The American Skyscraper, The American Hotel introduces many new topics and identifies buildings, architectural firms, and issues that have not received significant attention in American architectural history. Architectural firms Schultze & Weaver, George B. Post and Sons, and Morris Lapidus; hotels:ers Lucius M. Boomer and Statler; and buildings such as the Waldorf-Astoria are established as significant mileposts in the history of the American hotel. The essays also suggest the richness of the topic, encompassing variants of the basic building type—apartment hotels, chains, luxury and resort hotels—and issues related to technology, workers, race, and design. As an overview of a huge and largely unexplored topic, the book understandably does not cover its topic in the systematic way that is accomplished in The American Skyscraper. Repeated references to significant figures and firms such as Henry Hardenbergh and Warren & Wetmore reveal that many other essays could have been added to this volume.

The two books share several themes, including the impact of scientific management. The American Skyscraper presents mixed views on the subject: according to Fenske, Gilbert’s creation of a rational office allowed him to retain a small atelier-like practice while designing skyscrapers, while Schleier and Watt maintain that scientific management resulted in the estrangement of the worker from her labor and an oppressive workplace. Essays in The American Hotel present scientific management in a more favorable light: Davidson in his discussion of chains shows that they allowed for modern efficiency, and Sandoval-Strausz and Wilk argue that they improved the work conditions of hotel employees. The different representations of scientific management suggest differences in attitude toward the topics of work and leisure. Sandoval-Strausz and Wilk, and Fine and Moudry present balanced accounts of the problems and opportunities of work. The equation of the skyscraper with the more oppressive aspects of capitalism, however, is repeated in several of the essays on that building type but does not dominate the essays on hotels. Is one place of work more hostile than the others? Do the pleasures of hotels mask their exploitations? Or are media images and the historiography of the two spaces inherently different, and do they unconsciously bias our accounts by providing more negative accounts of office work and more neutral accounts of the hotel? Spectacular theatricality and its links to consumer culture also recur throughout both books, ranging from Berger’s examination of spectacle as a way for elite owners to entice the middle class, to the self-identification through consumption that helped to break down elite culture and which resulted in the mixing of different groups in social spaces, as suggested in Thomas and Snyder’s and Friedman’s essays.

The two volumes share an interdisciplinary approach that identifies the meanings and experiences diverse users associate with buildings. At times differing agendas result in contradictory viewpoints about issues such as scientific management or women’s response to the office workplace. But these disagreements should be understood positively, attesting to the current depth of discourse in American architectural history, and the inherent difficulty of this kind of cultural/architectural history. The two collections offer several exemplary methods of interdisciplinary work, whether it is Solomon’s analysis of the Tribune’s imagined community, Moudry’s mining of Metropolitan Life’s archives, Armstead’s careful reading of photographs, or Sandoval-Strausz and Wilk’s interpretation of popular media images. The books enlarge our understanding of these two
specific building types and ultimately the history of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century American architecture.

MARY BETH BETTS
Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York City

Kristina Wilson
Livable Modernism: Interior Decorating and Design During the Great Depression

Historians tend to emphasize either continuity or change. Kristina Wilson is a bridge builder in this study of the assimilation of modernism as a middle-class decorating vernacular in 1930s America. She seeks to broaden the canon of the modern design “monolith” (5) to include mid-market modernism, and to place its multivalent designs within an ongoing history of American furniture. Wilson coins the phrase “livable modernism” to refer to a kind of design that addresses the average user’s concern for familiarity, physical and psychological comfort, and affordability—with the implication that market research into “the non-ideal desires of consumers” (12) is an important and valid aspect of the design process. As a contribution to the sociology of modernist taste in America, this book is a complement to those that foreground the niche of early adopters of a new formal language. Wilson’s approach contributes to our understanding of how forms acquire meaning; how those meanings change as an expressive formal language is absorbed into different class contexts; and what happens when a style becomes one fashion choice among many.

The intellectual scaffolding is unobtrusive in Livable Modernism: Interior Decorating and Design During the Great Depression, an engaging and accessible book filled with period illustrations. The book accompanied an exhibition at the Yale University Art Gallery, and the project reveals its museum origins. Wilson’s initial brief as a curatorial fellow to study depression-era design and consult on museum acquisitions resulted in the book’s emphasis on furniture and tabletop design. This bias is sympathetic to Yale’s existing strengths in American furniture and the general curatorial aversion to anything too industrial or mass-produced.

The three chapters of Livable Modernism focus on the interior decoration of rooms for living, dining, and sleeping. There are no refrigerators, radios, or telephones in this book. With the exception of an interesting section on the bedroom alarm clock, there is no new technology. Wilson justifies this omission by arguing that the adoption of modernist forms for appliances in the kitchen, for example, was less problematic than for living-room furniture precisely because this coupling of new form and new technology allowed consumers to more easily break with tradition.

However, her argument sidesteps the role of the new total-package styling, annual model changes, and planned obsolescence that are such a key feature of appliance design in the 1930s. These approaches, however, undoubtedly influenced the conception and marketing of suites of modernist furniture in a new and important way. Wilson points out that Russel Wright, like many industrial designers of the period, started out in theater design. There, Wright first learned the importance of “a coherent aesthetic experience” (30). Wilson quotes a journalist commenting in 1934 that “equipping rooms down to the smallest accessory has become a favorite way of showing merchandise” (56). The appearance of 1930s appliances and that of mid-market modern furniture probably have more in common than this study allows. It seems possible that the total design in new bathrooms of the period, outfitted with a coordinated suite of modernist “furniture,” conditioned mid-market consumers to embrace modernism. The bias shown here is in part reflective of ongoing museum collecting practices that privilege furniture over refrigerators. However, it deflects attention from the problem of what changed in American consumer culture to explain the sudden ascendance of the industrial designer/stylist in the 1930s, and what the impact of this change was on the design process for, and marketing of, modernist furniture interiors. How did mid-market users experience the decorated house as a total entity in the middle of the Great Depression, as stylish new forms appeared from the driveway to the kitchen, the living room, and the bedroom, in reality and as an aspiration?

This caveat aside, Wilson has done a stellar job of covering a wide range of issues in the book. The work is scholarly, well organized, free of jargon, and filled with good analysis. For example, the chapter on the living room moves easily from examination of functionalist concerns with modularity, lightness, and mobility to sociological issues around the psychological meaning of comfort and the gendering of space in modest, open plans. Wilson’s analysis is particularly compelling in this latter section, and in her extended discussion of new bedroom interiors conceived as places of private retreat and experimentation with expressive individualism. This allows her to tease apart the changing sociological meaning, or reception, of modernism at different points in time. For example, after quickly establishing the importance newly placed on the companionate marriage, Wilson convincingly presents the challenge that couples faced in decorating a small, shared living room in a way that was neither too feminine nor too masculine. She discusses the marketing tactics used in the 1930s to reposition modernist design, which had become too closely associated with the excessively feminine and austerely theatrical. With new wisdom, a 1930s livable modernism could allow the man “to strew the Sunday paper about” and the woman to indulge a sensual desire for gleaming surface finishes (42).

Wilson’s excellent chapters on the dining room and bedroom further develop the theme of the house as a stage for the self-presentation of private and public selves. Wilson’s discussions of the buffet party and the vanity table are particularly persuasive and will probably