On occasion the text becomes bogged down in bureaucratic details, but the author relates a story of genuine human interest in the interaction between the strong personalities on the Board and those in the Branch. The Board, under the leadership of a succession of historians, including Brig. Gen. Ernest A. Cruikshank of Ontario and J. Clarence Webster of New Brunswick, continually focused on commemoration at the expense of preservation and was very slow to accept architecture as being worthy of commemoration on its own merits; whereas the Branch, particularly when it was under the progressive direction of James B. Harkin and E. A. Côté, tried to make inroads with innovative preservation projects. The Branch favored preservation over restoration and reconstruction, but its political masters were more interested in the visibility of the big intervention required by the latter.

Three themes are interwoven throughout the book. In addition to relating the history of the federal heritage program, Taylor also tells parts of the story of the broader preservation movement in Canada and comments on changing attitudes toward preservation. The latter two are of far more general interest, although, because they are secondary themes, neither can be presented in much depth. The introductory chapter, titled “Legacy,” is devoted to nongovernmental initiatives. It describes the early work of such groups as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (akin to the Daughters of the American Revolution) and explains how some organizations expressed nationalism through preservation while others were attracted to the past for its own sake. Taylor points out the ways in which different interest groups have read their own meanings into historic sites—Quebeckers, for example, saw Fort Chambly, essentially a British fort, as a symbol of their own French-Canadian heritage.

Some of the internal debates between the Board and the Branch reflect interesting issues of approach and philosophy. The reconstruction of Champlain’s habitation (1606) at Port Royal, Nova Scotia, and the preservation of the alleged (but probably erroneous) birthplace of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier lead Taylor to ask (but leave unanswered) the question, What does it matter if the [building] is the real thing or not? (p. 121), and to query whether or not these were true conservation actions. Elsewhere the debate is rekindled as to whether the ruins of Fortress Louisbourg should have been reconstructed (as they were) or preserved. Such excursions into the history and philosophy of preservation are important, and many readers will find them among the most engaging portions of the book.

All of this information is new to the published literature. Until now the preservation movement in Canada has not been chronicled, as it has in the United States.

The narrative trails off in the 1970s with the major federal programs at Dawson and Louisbourg. Federal heritage policy has become somewhat more focused since then, but the principal recent initiatives are cited only incidentally. The Canadian Inventory of Historic Building (not “Buildings,” p. 160), begun in 1970 to provide the Historic Sites and Monuments Board with comparative data, was the most ambitious survey to have been taken anywhere in the world. Although it has not been an unqualified success, it has spawned a considerable amount of superb research by Parks staff (some of it by Taylor himself); yet the inventory is cited only briefly, and the Branch’s many publications—which comprise a large portion of the literature on Canadian architectural history—are not mentioned at all. Likewise, the formation of Heritage Canada in 1973 by the federal government as an independent national trust is cited in only a cursory way (pp. 168, 170). The Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office, a child of the 1980s and the government’s first acknowledgment that it has a responsibility to preserve its own historic architecture, merits only a passing reference on the last page. The most recent federal action is understandably beyond the range of the book: the passing of the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act in 1988 and its proclamation into law in 1990. These recent endeavors have given the federal government’s preservation program an impact far beyond what might be expected from its weak constitutional mandate.

These lacunae aside, the book is thorough and the research sound. The text describes the federal heritage activity in an objective and authoritative manner, showing a fairness in its mixture of praise and criticism. A series of appendices identify the members of the Board and explain the organization of the bureaucracy. Negotiating the Past is an important first chapter in documenting the heritage movement in Canada.

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a designer, still, as this book argues, competitions are an institution in and of themselves: a system that is integral to architecture, from education to actual practice.

*The Experimental Tradition* is what is known as an “accompanying publication,” a book that both records an exhibition and extends the meaning and interpretation beyond what is shown on a gallery or museum’s walls. In 1988–1989 the Architectural League of New York sponsored the exhibit *The Experimental Tradition: Twenty-five Years of American Architectural Competitions*, 1960–1985, which was seen in six cities. The exhibition illustrated some of the entries for the following competitions: Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington, D.C.; Boston City Hall; Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California; Yale Mathematics Building; Roosevelt Island Housing, New York; Capitol Building Annex, St. Paul; Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.; New Orleans Museum of Art; Domaine Clos Pegase Winery, California; and the Escondido (California) Civic Center.

As an exhibit it provided an instant nostalgia for the recent past, a feeling of déjà-vu (was that what Michael Graves and Richard Meier were like in the FDR Memorial competition of 1960?), and an overwhelming number of drawings that needed hours to sort out. Since most of these competitions were well known in that they were heavily publicized, commented upon, and in several cases controversial, the reasons for their selection are obvious. Why certain entrants were selected for the exhibition, however, was (and is) unclear, though clearly not all of the 574 entrants for the FDR competition (or for several of the others) could be included. The book has a twenty-two-page section on the ten competitions and illustrates the designs shown in the exhibit and a few extras. It is on one level a valuable compendium, though the illustrations are in many cases so small that even a dedicated magnifying-glass user will be frustrated. A similar complaint can be registered with many of the other illustrations in the book: they are too small to be readable.

The book proper, however, is much more: it is seven chapters on the history of competitions. The authors and their chapters are as follows: Hélène Lipstadt, the editor, who writes the introduction and the early history along with two more chapters, one on American competitions from 1922 to 1960, and a second that covers the exhibit from 1960 to the present; Barry Bergdoll, who surveys Europe from 1401 to 1927; Sarah Bradford Landau, who discusses America from 1789 to 1922; Mary McLeod, who treats the Vietnam Memorial and its battles; and Helen Searing, who investigates the recent attempt of the New Orleans Museum to expand. Lipstadt argues that competition is a “process” fundamental to the artistic and professional aspect of architecture; competitions are really an institution, an activity “emblematic of architects’ place in society” (p. 10). Hence the focus of the book is not so much on stylistic change as on the process of competitions, the types, and the effects. The method by which this is carried out varies: there are chapters that record nearly every important public competition for a period, and then others that delve into a single competition. The ebb and flow of the popularity of competitions is recorded, revealing their growth in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, their low repute in the 1940s and 1950s (except for a few well-known examples), and then their recovery in recent years. The consequence is a split personality—perhaps like competitions—some chapters with many illustrations but little discussion of the buildings, and then others that examine the positions represented by the different entries. Although style is claimed not to be the focus, still meaning, monumentalism, and the public dimension become sub-themes in many of the competitions held since the 1940s.

As an analytical history of competitions, the book has many virtues: it provides a record of American adventures in public competitions and an overall schematic history. The European side of the story is more briefly treated, with only a nod to the origins in the early Renaissance revival of the Greek tradition of competitions, then more lengthy discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century developments. The stories that can be wrung out of individual competitions are brilliantly displayed in the chapters on the Vietnam Memorial and the New Orleans Museum expansion.

Although the claim is made that the competition process is fundamental to the architectural profession, the analysis is never really pushed very far in this direction. Some note is made of the contribution of the competition system to the jury system that is common to most architectural education; but that is where it is left, with little reflection on how such a process works both to enhance and to stifle creativity. Does the competition system encourage experiment, as the book (and title) implies, or do competitions, especially in a school setting, actually restrict the range of possibilities? In spite of the belief in the “experimental” nature of competitions, is that really the nature of the competition process, or is there another side of competitions that results in conformity, or in what is expected? While note is made early in the book that a competition occurs when designs are prepared by “two or more architects for the same project, on the same site, at the same time” (p. 9), there is little exploration of this element, which has been common to much practice, both today and historically. Beyond the high-profile public competition, what is the relation of the competition (or competitive) mentality to the historical development of the architectural profession in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? There are numerous issues, for competition plays a role in actual day-to-day practice, in obtaining commissions, in office work, in team work, in design development. A sense of competition rules the world of many architects; it is fundamental to the highest honors, awards, and medals of the profession. Frequently the selection of work for publication in journals comes from a competitive system. For many architects, competition is how they view the world, how they think it works. *The Experimental Tradition* opens a door onto another view of architecture, a very positive virtue.

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The literature on competitions has until recently been limited to histories of well-known individual contests. Hilde De Haan