homebuilding and, more importantly, the builders’ preferred plan-type, in their broader theoretical and reform context. Although she rightly acknowledges the FHA Technical Bulletin series and their “minimum house” as an antecedent for Levitt and Sons, the FHA staff derived their plan principles from two decades of research including the John B. Pierce Foundation’s time-and-motion studies of families and household activities as well as the light and air requirements the American Public Health Association and other agencies had established. Further, the basic four-room-plus-bath dwelling the Levitts built can be traced to mail-order kit housing and popular bungalow publications. Californian Herbert Hoover championed the small-house ideal nationally as Secretary of Commerce during the 1920s, and the agency’s President’s Conference on Housing and Home Ownership in 1931 provided the New Deal FHA with a concise catalogue of contemporary practice. Given this, the author’s assertion that Levitt and Sons’ “elimination of the basement and reduction of the overall plan to four rooms” was a “radical” departure from “traditional forms of suburban architecture” (65) can only be true if one considers Levitt’s pre–World War II work as the totality of residential construction on the then-urban fringe.

These conceptual and historiographic concerns carry over to Kelly’s language, which is often inappropriate and occasionally misleading. When discussing the residents’ “rebuilding,” for example, she uses the term “structural addition(s)” instead of remodeling or a room addition. A questionable style-based taxonomy produces the term “neocolonial Cape Cod” for Levitt and Sons’s house-type of 1947 (64). When analyzing an individual dwelling’s elevation and formal qualities Kelly elects to use “topography,” as in the phrase, the “topography chosen to ornament the Levitt houses further reveals the value system of the period” (63). Their “geography,” or plan, “supported . . . a type of sociopolitical imprimatur on the very nature of family life” (63). Most critical in this regard is Kelly’s use of the professional designation “architect” when defining Alfred Levitt’s role in the family business (36, 153).

The publisher and the book’s designer did not do the author any favors; there are flaws in both the illustrations and production. For example, although Midwest City is the third illustration in the text (25, fig. 1.2) the project is not mentioned until much later (156), and does not appear in the index. More problematic is the fact that the first and only map appears at the end of chapter 7 (156). It is a small (2” × 4”; scale 1” = 30 miles) and barely legible map of Long Island containing the numerals one through eight. There is no legend. According to the caption it illustrates “distances from Levittown to industrial plants in 1947,” a critical variable for understanding this development and postwar city building. Unfortunately, Levittown itself does not correspond to any of the numbers. Instead we are told Levittown is “east of Hempstead,” which is also not identified.

This oversight belies the fact that Levittown certainly appears prominently on the mental maps of historians, urbanists, design professionals and, most likely, a high percentage of the postwar generation. For the author’s target audience, Levittown must be as recognizable in its general outlines as L’Enfant’s plan for Washington, D.C.; a railroad speculative grid, or Radburn, New Jersey; and the New Deal Greenbelt projects. One might argue that the received Levittown history is, perhaps, even more familiar. The project became an immediate icon and the name alone invokes an entire world and worldview ranging from Malvina Reynolds’s ticky-tacky boxes to nostalgic reverie. As its fiftieth anniversary approaches, preservation planners have begun debating Levittown’s relative merits for landmark status. The point then is that Levittown and lesser-known postwar community developments are worthy of study. More than that, analyzing and interpreting these constructions is essential for understanding the contemporary metropolis. Examining them in isolation is, however, a questionable strategy.

What is needed are more fine-grained, field-based studies that build out from the house-type and lot to street patterns, the location of employment and services, and regional systems. Inevitably the spatial frame for these projects will be metropolitan rather than suburban. While well-intentioned, Expanding the American Dream ultimately falls short of this goal. Given the growing interest in the topic, however, we can look forward confidently to studies of postwar development that uncover the complex relationships between property, artifacts, and people. Then the unsatisfying and insupportable myth of a homogeneous suburban culture finally will be put to rest.

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John S. Garner, editor
THE COMPANY TOWN, ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIETY IN THE EARLY INDUSTRIAL AGE

In April 1980, at a meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in Boston, John Garner chaired a session on “Industrial Landscapes and the Vernacular Buildings that Defined Them.” Joyce Berry of Oxford University Press attended the session and suggested to Garner that he edit the papers for publication; the result is this book.

The title might suggest a survey of industrial architecture since, say, the
he acquired farms in northern France for cultivating sugar-beets and some fifteen thousand acres of cacao plantations in Nicaragua. Here, too, housing was provided for the employees. The essential aspects of these properties are admirably and sufficiently illustrated. A final point of excellence is how firmly Garner places this broad and balanced account of Noisiel within the history of company towns in France.

Mats Ahnlund’s and Lasse Brunstroem’s chapter, “The Company Town in Scandinavia,” differs strikingly. Their approach is encyclopedic, dealing with the extraction and processing of a variety of raw materials, and hence discusses individual enterprises very briefly. Industrial products were unusually important to the economies of Scandinavian nations, but the climate made it difficult to keep individual factories working. The result was that Scandinavians had a different attitude toward industrial architecture. Elsewhere, buildings in company towns are likely to reflect the local architectural vernacular; in Scandinavia they could command the attention of the most sophisticated professional figures. Alvar Aalto’s extensive work for industry in Finland is by no means a unique phenomenon.

Olga Paterlini de Koch’s “Company Towns of Chile and Argentina” is similarly comprehensive, although it also includes a case study of the sugar towns of Tucuman, Argentina. The industries described in this chapter—nitrates, copper, tannin, meat-packing, and sugar—were important for export. By 1910, 50 percent of Chile’s income depended on the production of nitrate. Many of the entrepreneurs were foreigners, notably Baron de Portalis and the Guggenheims. Natives provided the unskilled labor, since they proved best able to perform heavy work in tropical climates.

The hierarchical social organization that so frequently has characterized company towns seems to have reached an extreme of rigidity in the sugar-processing settlements of Tucuman. Everything was ordered. “No one could enter or leave without company permission” (226). The owner might live in a South American version of a Queen Anne manor, the workers in single-story row huts arranged around open courtyards. These supplied space for family vegetable gardens while continuous colonnades along the street provided informal living rooms. The author is interested in community planning and in housing but otherwise hardly at all in architecture. The only suggestion of a factory occupies the left-hand half of one of a dozen illustrations.

The remaining three chapters concern the United States. Appropriately, Richard Candee’s “Early New England Mill Towns of the Piscataqua River Valley” presents a complete contrast. He describes the history of four small New Hampshire communities over a generation and concerns himself especially with the architectural details of their textile factories.

The conventional history of industrial architecture in America emphasizes the creation, starting in the 1790s, of a number of small industrial settlements in New England. Candee informs us that in this particular group—Dover, Somersworth, Newmarket, and Rollinsford—construction was active between 1815 and the 1840s. He suggests that their buildings provided the opportunity for entrepreneurs to experiment with the operation of factories far larger than those under construction contemporaneously in Lowell. The mills also had simpler roofs and used a different type of wood construction, one that was more resistant to fire. Lowell later adopted all these changes.

Margaret Crawford’s chapter, “Earle S. Draper and the Company Town in the American South,” presents yet another approach. She achieves the most comprehensive social analysis in the book, but wholly ignores factory buildings. The American South she discusses
is the Piedmont east of the Appalachians. At the end of the Civil War there was virtually no industrial production of textiles in this area. But it did have certain geographical advantages, and “from 1894 to 1927 the average Southern textile wage was 40 percent below that of other parts of the country” (142). So, by 1899, almost three-quarters of American cotton textile spindles were located in the South.

What evolved was a culture of company-owned villages. “Even after leaving the mill, workers lived, shopped, studied, played and worshipped in an environment created by the employer” (144). Rents were moderate and “by the end of the century 92 percent of Southern textile workers lived in mill villages. Although owners rarely made their homes in the mill villages, residence was considered to be part of a foreman’s or a superintendent’s job” (143–44).

A new type of mill village appeared after 1917 when the New Englander, Earle S. Draper, opened his own planning office in Charlotte. His designs followed Olmsted’s principles and the practices of English garden cities. Unfortunately a great economic depression struck the textile industry in 1923. By 1925 it was clear that “Draper’s imagery and amenities could not efface the reality of the mill village system” (164).

Leland M. Roth’s chapter, “Company Towns in the Western United States,” is a survey of the immense area that runs from the Dakotas and Texas to the Pacific coast. Within that area he is concerned primarily with settlements associated with mining and lumbering, but he discusses everything from temporary camps to well-established cities. Dealing with such a geographic and typological range of material, he draws few general conclusions. But he does call attention to vivid and illuminating contrasts, for example, that between Tyrone, New Mexico and Longview, Washington.

Tyrone, New Mexico was a copper town commissioned by Phelps Dodge for the company’s own use. In 1915–16 it was designed by Bertram Goodhue, partially built, then closed down by a depression in 1921. “When copper production was resumed at Tyrone in 1966 the method employed was pit mining. The post office was moved, the buildings demolished, and where once was a beautiful, if fragmented, planned town, there opened a vast hole” (187).

In contrast, in 1918 R. A. Long, founder of the Long Bell Lumber Company of Kansas City, decided at the age of sixty-eight to sell everything he owned and begin anew, “closer to better timber reserves in the Pacific Northwest” (188). In 1921 he purchased land on the Columbia River, opposite Kelso, Washington. Gradually Long enlarged his view, deciding to build not a company town but an industrial city containing both his own and other industrial enterprises. Relations between capital and labor had been deteriorating and local labor was unionized, so Long decided to attempt a high standard in planning, public building, and housing.

Persuaded to aim for 50,000 inhabitants, he employed the landscape architects and planners Hare and Hare in association with George Kessler, all of Kansas City. Parks separated the mills from downtown and the residential districts in a respectable City-Beautiful plan. Lots were sold in 1923 and simultaneously commercial building began. By 1932 the town had 12,000 inhabitants, by 1990, 31,200.

The Company Town is a serious contribution to an important subject, serious because of its high scholarly standards concluding in a most serviceable index. Moreover, various passages in the book are models of treatment, for example, Garner’s building-by-building and floor-by-floor analysis of the way the Menier Chocolate plant functioned, or Margaret Crawford’s treatment of economics and sociology.

The book is also important because company towns have made a major contribution to modern society, similar, perhaps, to the contribution great abbeys made to Romanesque Europe. But the latter’s contribution cannot be discussed without reference to individual religious leaders such as Becket and St. Bernard on the one hand or to cathedrals on the other. Just so, from an architectural point of view company towns must be related both to company camps and hamlets and to relevant company cities, be it a Lowell, an Essen, or a Birmingham. While this volume mentions camps and villages in passing, industrial cities are virtually ignored, it would seem deliberately. This leaves company towns floating historically, mere antiquarian curiosities.

Ignored, too, is any reference to our dependence—or lack thereof—on company towns today. Because here it is possible to learn the facts, study of the present may provide important insights into the past. For example, part of the effort to revive General Motors was the recent decision to create not a new model but a wholly new car, the now highly popular Saturn. The corporation selected Spring Hill, Tennessee (population in 1990, 1,494) as the site for the factory. A quotation from The Economist of 2 July 1994 will make clear the current situation:

On June 23–24, 1994, nearly 50,000 customers drove to Saturn’s plant at Spring Hill, Tennessee, for a country fair, complete with entertainers . . . arts and crafts exhibitions, and barbecues . . . . The hitch? Thanks to lackluster productivity in its factories, Saturn is barely profitable.

One wonders how the productivity of the company towns mentioned in this book compared to that of the company cities that have been ignored.

A third major area that the book does not address is the company town as a community. The residents in company towns were not undifferentiated
masses, and could not be housed as though they were. In the United States the representative of the owners had his mansion; the financial and engineering professionals their private homes; laborers lived in row dwellings that were sometimes boarding houses; natives were best separated from immigrants, and permanent employees from transients. And then there was the bourgeoisie. The location of various kinds of dwellings is generally noted on the city plans here provided, but texts never discuss how well or ill arrangements worked.

In company towns the owner or the central business or businesses usually made contributions to charitable institutions—shops, schools, playing fields, libraries, and, invariably in the United States, churches of different denominations. These were intended to benefit all social groups. How much was given, and with what restrictions, varied enormously. What has not varied is the degree to which students of company towns have neglected the entire field of charity and shopping as well.

It is obviously desirable that there should be further surveys of industrial communities covering at least the European and American areas and the periods not discussed in this book. Hopefully these would duplicate this volume’s consistently high-quality scholarship but also adopt a broader approach as suggested in these last paragraphs.

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Twentieth-Century Architecture

Karen E. Hudson

Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style

Karen E. Hudson

The Will and the Way: Paul R. Williams, Architect

At last there is a monograph on an African-American architect and it is, fittingly, on Paul Revere Williams (1894–1980), a prolific Los Angeles-based independent practitioner whose creative life spanned five decades from 1922 through 1973. Williams was well known to white southern California, from which he drew most of his clients, and nationally to the black community, for which he stood as an icon of racial progress on the Booker T. Washington model. In 1938, Life magazine characterized him as “perhaps the most successful Negro artist in the United States.” Only Julian Abele (1881–1950) could be considered as competition for the historical slot of the most successful early black practitioner, but Abele stayed behind the scenes as a designer in the Horace Trumbauer office. (Abele was light enough to pass for white and considered himself aracial.) The forty or so other African-American architects working during the first half of the century, figures such as Robert R. Taylor, John A. Lankford, Vertner W. Tandy, Wallace A. Rayfield, or William S. Pittman, were restricted by the limited economy of the black community to which they were confined and thus produced significantly less work. A half-dozen or so of these figures are now subjects of scholarly investigations and planned publications.

Like W. E. B. DuBois, Williams’s early schooling was with white children and free from racist hurts. Thus came a shock when, as an older schoolboy looking for a job, he learned about the color line. Discouraged during high school from his early interest in architecture because his teachers believed that the black community could not support this profession as it could medicine, law, and the ministry, Williams persisted. He had heard of William S. Pittman (1875–1958) and thought that since there was one black architect there might as well be two. Williams trained at an art school and, for three years, at the Beaux Arts Institute of Design atelier in Los Angeles. He studied architectural engineering and business at the University of Southern California and worked for others before opening his own office in 1922. Starting with a prosperous high-school classmate, the light-skinned Williams found early on a white clientele for expensive houses. (He also built more modest ones as well and a church and a YMCA for the African-American community.) Other early clients included a senator to whom he had once sold newspapers, actor Lon Chaney, and an English-born racing baron who required that his Tudor estate cost not less than $500,000 in 1929 dollars. The array of elegant and finely detailed Tudor, Mediterranean, and Georgian-style houses that emanated from Williams’s office during the 1920s would constitute an excellent debut even for a well-placed white designer.

Williams’s production continued apace during the 1930s with a general shift to a Georgian-Regency style having thin, elongated columns and minimal detailing that seem proto-modernist. His residential skills led to the Beverly Hills Saks Fifth Avenue interiors and to an impressive Georgian office building for the Music Corporation of America as