pitals (1999), which begins, like the Thompson and Golden volume, with the Greek healing temple, and finishes with the AIDS ward at the San Francisco General Hospital. In this alternative survey of hospitals, historian of medicine Risse uses individual patients’ narratives to draw penetrating sketches of hospital space (and particular illnesses) through the ages.

Historian David C. Sloane, too, has taken an innovative look at recent hospital design through the influence of shopping malls. In his 1994 article in the Journal of Architectural Education (48 [Nov. 1994]: 82–98) and a book manuscript entitled “Mall Medicine” (with Beverlie Conant Sloane; forthcoming), Sloane analyzes America’s increasingly commercialized healthcare institutions.

Stephen Verderber and David J. Fine’s Healthcare Architecture in an Era of Radical Transformation is intended to continue where Thompson and Golden stopped. This large-format, generously illustrated tome looks at hospitals after 1965, the year that saw the beginning of Medicaid and Medicare in the United States. Robert Venturi’s postmodern manifesto, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, as they point out, was published only a year later.

Indeed, the impact of postmodernism on hospital architecture is the central theme of Verderber and Fine’s book. It surveys in nine chapters the major changes that have occurred since the demise of the “modernist machine hospital” (17) in the decades immediately after World War II. The chapters cover topics such as the increasingly unsatisfactory modern hospital, the rise of the “anistospitalism” movement, utopian schemes for hospitals, the impact of decentralization, the rise of the private room (and consequent end of the ward), health architecture for the aged, and the rise of community care centers. The final chapter looks at hot issues in healthcare architecture: home care, new technologies, and changing relationships between providers and patients.

Some architectural historians may be disappointed by this book. Although it is an analysis of architectural trends, it includes little that might be construed as historical. Each chapter, for example, begins with a clear statement relating hospitals to a social or political idea. “By the mid-1960s the nursing home had come to symbolize the negative aspects of aging and the inevitability of death,” begins chapter 7 (223). These introductory remarks are then followed by descriptions and illustrations of several case-study buildings, under bold-type subheadings. None of these passages is lengthy enough to get beyond a mere description of the building, and nowhere do the authors return to their initial assertions.

Historians may also find disconcerting the authors’ rather creative use of nouns, especially those denoting architectural issues and movements: monolithism (31), interstitialism (116), new residentialism (167), and windowness (217), to name a few.

Nonetheless, Healthcare Architecture in an Era of Radical Transformation includes valuable information for architectural historians eager to learn more about hospitals. Perhaps its two major strengths are that the book is both a superb introduction to the major hospital architects of the late twentieth century and a useful compilation of benchmark dates in the evolution of the postmodern hospital.

The story is a complex saga of overlapping narratives. By the 1970s, the high-tech mega hospital was fully entrenched. One characteristic of these hospitals was the interstitial floor system, which provided an entire story for building-support systems between each pair of patient-occupied floors. At precisely the same time, however, the hospice movement (begun in Britain in 1967) and postmodern thinking encouraged alternatives to these machinelike forms. A notable change in focus from the treatment of sickness to the maintenance of health was first legible in the architectural literature on hospitals about 1972. And a new focus on patient-centered facilities, which embraced home-like spaces and furniture, regional symbolism, and humanly scaled buildings, marked the era. The interstitial system was outmoded by 1980.

Since then, Americans have been faced with the construction of “virtual healthscapes,” whereby the home may supplant the hospital as a center for medical care, as more medical advice is disseminated electronically. This “functional deconstruction” of the acute-care hospital, too, has meant a more central role for the outpatient community clinic and the wellness center.

Healthcare Architecture in an Era of Radical Transformation also includes solid material on the relationship of U.S. healthcare funding to particular building programs, such as the Hill-Burton Act of 1946. In addition, the authors are skilled navigators of the complexity of the hospital plan types that have appeared since 1965. And the information on international differences in hospital trends, particularly in Europe and Canada, is also most welcome.

Verderber and Fine’s book has much to teach us about the inner workings of contemporary healthcare architecture. But for those who prefer to visit hospitals from a distance, there’s always network television.

ANNMARIE ADAMS
McGill University

John B. Rehder
Delta Sugar: Louisiana’s Vanishing Plantation Landscape

John B. Rehder’s Delta Sugar: Louisiana’s Vanishing Plantation Landscape takes a long, deep, field-based, interdisciplinary look at Louisiana’s sugar industry and the cultural landscapes it helped to create. Sugarcane plantations have long stood as important landscape elements in southern Louisiana, a region that now displays a jumble of multiple surface features including swamp and marsh communities, urbanized areas such as New Orleans, and the heavily industrialized
Chemical Corridor known as “Cancer Alley.” The author, a geographer by training, traces the sugar industry's transplantation from its South Asian and Caribbean sources and examines how technology, culture, and the marketplace have transformed many aspects of the industry's built environment and material culture during the past four decades.

While Rehder utilizes a primarily cultural-geographic approach to analyze industrial and agricultural landscapes and architecture, what sets his study apart is his interpretation of change over time. This book is the result of over thirty years of research and fieldwork. When the author began his research in the late 1960s, he located 202 functioning sugar plantations by traversing every bayou road in twenty Louisiana parishes. In 1993, he retraced the same routes and repeated the process, only to find that 120 of those original 202 plantations had been destroyed or “reduced to the point that they no longer had a landscape presence” (9). Delta Sugar documents Rehder's effort to find out just what happened to this distinctive plantation environment and why. He argues that, while this story “has been and continues to be one of cane growers and entrepreneurs, push and pull factors, detrimental and positive consequences in the plantation transformations into corporate forms, ... one of the most profound influences on twenty-five years of landscape change in the Louisiana sugar industry is the influence of the diffusion of ideas” from out-of-state entrepreneurs who introduced a new “farmerless farm” plantation model to the delta (305).

In the first chapter, “Plantation Evolution,” Rehder defines a sugar plantation, examines the delta environment itself as a workable foundation for sugarcane production, and introduces the historical background of the sugar plantation industry. Sugar plantations, which first appeared in this area around 1795, had their roots in an earlier tobacco- and indigo-based plantation legacy. While such plantations have been persistently dominant features of this area’s rural environment from 1795 until about 1970, today they are quickly vanishing. The Lower Mississippi River floodplain in southern Louisiana, a location that is, geographically speaking, on the northern margins of the sugar-producing world, is also the last place in the continental United States where a functioning plantation system exists. Still, changes in land tenure from ownership to leaseholding have wrought correspondingly radical changes to the landscape. The author defines a sugar plantation not only in economic and business terms but also in terms of its landscape expressions. A model Louisiana sugar plantation is a complete agricultural enterprise with distinctive features. These may include a sugar factory, a centralized outbuilding complex, a village of nearly identical laborers' dwellings, an overseer's house, a mansion or big house with its attendant house lot buildings and structures, and acres of long, narrow fields extending from stream banks to backswamps and laced with long, straight ditches.

Rehder’s analysis considers how the sugar industry, the physical delta environment, sugarcane physiology, and Louisiana’s immigrant history intertwined to create this plantation environment. He traces the history of the cane industry, following its diffusion and development from its original source areas to the Caribbean and then to Louisiana sugar plantations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although technological developments such as sugarcane improvements, sugar mills, and changes in sugar-boiling apparatus perpetuated the sugar plantation and its industry, the forms of original land divisions exerted just as much influence as technological change. Louisiana was surveyed using the French arpent survey system, which produced long, narrow landholdings with their narrow dimensions typically fronting on stream courses or bayou. Portions of these original lot forms underlay many subsequent land divisions and have consequently shaped the region’s evolving plantation environment.

In the second chapter, the author correlates settlement patterns and house forms to culture groups. By examining dwelling types ranging from mansions to quarter houses and overseers’ houses, Rehder attempts to link them to French and Anglo-American plantations. He also analyzes and maps various types of settlement patterns to identify French and Anglo-American plantations imprinted from the first effective settlement; in doing so he finds that, while French Creole forms, typified by linear settlement patterns, predominated along the Mississippi River, Anglo forms, characterized by more block-shaped settlements, prevailed on the western, southern, and northern extremities of the sugar region. The author maintains that these settlement patterns and dwelling forms, which accompanied planters migrating from the French West Indies and the Lowland and Tide-water South, evince “the cultures of their initial owner-builders” and that they served “as keys to cultural diffusion” (122).

A chapter entitled “The Morphology of the Functional Plantation Landscape” explores changes in the sugarcane cultivating and refining process and the way those changes in turn shaped the plantation environment. The author investigates functional plantation elements ranging from sugar houses and outbuildings to fields, roads, landings, and levees, demonstrating how technological shifts such as the introduction and evolution of the mechanical cane harvester affected the agricultural process of sugarcane harvesting as well as the more physical aspects of the plantation.

“A Prescription for Landscape Decline” considers the events of the last thirty years that have shaped this changing Louisiana plantation system. While a certain inertia helped to perpetuate the traditional plantation landscape from 1795 until the 1970s, the emergence of new agribusiness models caused dramatic shifts in the structure of plantations over time. By the late twentieth century, the author found that “the concept of plantation as a functional and cul-
tural form in Louisiana admittedly has been rapidly declining and is probably approaching death" (176). What was really going on in the Louisiana sugar business? the author asks, and what was emerging to take the place of the dying traditional plantation model? Fieldwork and research led him to identify five different plantation models, ranging from the traditional plantation model—a relic from ante-bellum times—to what he calls the CALA model (name derived from California and Louisiana), a 1970s combination of California agribusiness and Louisiana plantation corporations that resulted in a “farmerless farm” and a “bulldozed, sanitized landscape,” from which “the old plantation patriarchal management and settlement qualities of the southern plantation” have disappeared (187, 178, xiii).

In the following chapters, the author examines in depth six case-study plantations representing a cross-section of the cultural heritage and morphology of the Louisiana sugarcane plantation. The case studies, which are organized by degree of decline and type of ownership, best represent the two focused time periods during which the author undertook his fieldwork: the 1960s and the 1990s. Although these plantations all represent differing locations and patterns of change, the extent of some of the transformations they experienced is neatly captured in Rehder’s discussion of Ashland Plantation, now almost an archaeological site consisting only of a brick sugar-factory foundation, a few sheds, and a pump house: “Ashland’s fate was determined by its location—to close to a growing oil-boom city; too far from the conscious efforts of management to retain an agricultural landscape, especially a plantation one; and too far in time from its past role as a sugar plantation on the North American landscape” (224).

The final chapter briefly examines the causes of such dramatic change. Louisiana’s sugarcane plantations maintain Rehder, do not stand as isolated regional expressions but are in fact interwoven into a much broader national and global fabric of multiple processes and events. Factors ranging from federal government controls on sugar and environmental protection regulations to the introduction of soybeans, meteorological disasters, and the consideration of economies of size in sugar factories all played a part in this profound transformation.

Delta Sugar, winner of the Vernacular Architecture Forum’s Abbott Lowell Cummings Prize for its outstanding contribution to the study of vernacular architecture and cultural landscapes of North America, is an exemplary study. While Rehder’s book is a well-researched, comprehensive, and very readable examination of this unique and disappearing environment, what most distinguishes his study is its unusual methodology and its depth of analysis through time. The author has not simply augmented his earlier study with updated field notes, but he has also incorporated an entirely new layer by carefully considering the implications of the changes these plantations have experienced. Rehder is particularly adept at relating technological and economic shifts to changing landscape morphology, and his story of sugar plantations disappearing over time will resonate with many architectural historians who revisit “vanished” sites they have surveyed at an earlier date—all too often, the field notes we so carefully record amount to building and cultural landscape obituaries. The author’s architectural analysis sometimes tends to oversimplify what are very complex sets of relationships between building form and culture, but this is a relatively minor shortcoming in light of the depth, temporal scope, and originality of his landscape analysis. On balance, Delta Sugar is an outstanding book that offers a fine model for other such studies and makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on American cultural landscapes.

GABRIELLE M. LANIER
James Madison University

Howard Smith Miller, photographs by Quinta Scott

The Eads Bridge Saint Louis, Missouri

Walter C. Kidney

Pittsburgh’s Bridges: Architecture and Engineering

Darl Rastorfer

Six Bridges: The Legacy of Othmar H. Ammann


To begin with the Eads book, it was inspired by a 1974 Charles Guggenheim documentary film on St. Louis that fortuitously coincided with the centennial of the Eads Bridge. Quinta Scott, an aspiring photographer, was so taken with Guggenheim’s images of the bridge that she decided to photograph it herself. To caption the photographs, she sought the assistance of Howard S. Miller, then a professor of history. The two authors decided to expand the project from a photographic essay into the book we see today. The book chronicles seven years