dissertation format as far as the typography and iconography are concerned. Numerous and alluring, the illustrations—mostly postcards and receipts—are drawn almost exclusively from the private Debuisson collection. Clustered after each section, the images are not referenced in the main text, and their captions are minimal. Floor plans are shown for only two designs—a little-known hotel and a lavish Turkish bath—leading readers to wonder why the intricate, often flexible, layouts, which the author expertly discusses on the strength of articles she found in the journal La Construction Moderne, are not reproduced. Additionally, maps of the discussed districts indicating the locations of described hotels and leisure amenities would have been wonderful visual aids. Floor plans would have helped to clarify the deployment, within the hotels themselves, of planning and decorative techniques (such as enfilades and mirrors) inherited from French tradition and Beaux-Arts pedagogy, and, at an urban scale, maps would have shown the extent to which large amenities were embedded into the existing fabric of the city and therefore rather inconspicuous from the street. The absence of an index of establishment names and locations is also frustrating.

Plus ça change … Walking on the stately Rue Pergolèse next to Avenue Foch, we might not realize that Spanish-style bullfighting was performed there in 1889, and we might find it hard to believe that Buffalo Bill camped near the Porte Maillot in 1889 and Champ de Mars in 1905, his Wild West extravaganza a travel substitute for Parisian audiences. Pleasures are volatile: the Hippodrome on Boulevard de Clichy was replaced by the Gaumont-Palace movie theater, the Skating-Rink at Chaussée d’Antin by the Bikini of Paris. Georges Chedanne’s Élysées Palace remained a hotel for only two decades. Although favorite Second Empire haunts such as the Rues du Helder and Vivienne have lost their glamour, affluent tourists continue to patronize and affect the same districts as in 1900. Internal modernization is a constant necessity for luxury hotels (the Plaza Athénée just reopened, and the Ritz and Crillon are closed, as of this writing). Paris would be “colonized by the rich” (89) rings as true today as it did in 1863.

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Note


Marta Gutman
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014, 454 pp., 130 b/w illus. $45 (cloth), ISBN 9780226311289

Apart from its origins during the California Gold Rush, Oakland was similar to other small American cities during the mid-nineteenth century. In step with the rest of the nation, California was becoming industrialized and urbanized. The state’s progress relied heavily on immigrant labor, but white Protestants presented the presence of the Chinese, Irish Catholics, and African Americans who built the infrastructure needed for growth. Immigrants and blacks lived in the worst parts of the cities they helped create, and their children suffered the consequences. Municipal governments had neither the inclination nor the budgets to fund the necessary services, so women volunteers filled the void.

In A City for Children, Marta Gutman explores how charitable institutions housed in repurposed buildings attempted to replace “damaged” childhoods with “good” ones. She documents in meticulous detail the buildings and spaces that the women of Oakland created in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to take care of kids. Children of working mothers needed places to learn and play, and children who had lost one or both parents needed shelter. Working through voluntary associations, middle-class Protestant and Catholic women transformed existing buildings into nurseries and kindergartens, orphan asylums, schools, playgrounds, and a settlement house. These institutions constituted the “charitable landscapes” (note the plural) mentioned in the subtitle. A map on page 26 locating sixteen such places in Oakland around 1910 is one of 130 illustrations of children, buildings, and floor plans that enrich the book. Gutman relies on archived oral histories, fieldwork, and personal interviews to reveal how repurposed buildings established a public presence for women and children in the city.

A group of Oakland women formed the Ladies’ Relief Society in 1871 after hearing that the Great Chicago Fire had left survivors freezing in the harsh winter. Women set up their sewing machines in downtown Brayton Hall to sew for the Chicago victims, and they soon decided to form a permanent association. Moving their activities from their homes to a public space gave women of differing social classes and religions the opportunity to meet on common ground. Most important, the Relief Society provided them with a new identity and a sense of political potential.

In 1878 that potential came to fruition when the Relief Society renovated a farmhouse in the Temescal district to serve as the Children’s Home. The two-story neo-Georgian house, surrounded by a garden, was symbolic of middle-class white Protestant family life. It soon became home to sixty children, the majority of whose parents were foreign-born. In 1882 the Relief Society recognized that those at the other end of the age spectrum—elderly women—also needed shelter. The organization hired architects to design the Home for Aged Women on the same block as the Children’s Home. The repurposed building for indigent orphans and the purpose-built institution for women who could afford to pay their own way were located side by side.

The Children’s Home and the Home for Aged Women were just the beginning for Oakland women’s groups. Soon they had converted a saloon into the West Oakland Free Kindergarten, transformed a two-story working-class house into the West Oakland Settlement (influenced by the settlement house movement begun by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr), and turned an empty lot into a playground. They continued to build orphanages, schools, and playgrounds into the 1940s.
Gutman is an architectural historian and licensed architect whose strength is documenting individual buildings. She incorporates urban planning ideas into her account of Oakland, referring to the buildings as “nodes.” In The Image of the City, Kevin Lynch defines nodes as destinations where people gather for specific purposes; some may be the focus of their districts and serve as landmarks. The repurposed buildings that were so significant in women’s charitable efforts to improve the lives of children would have blended into their neighborhoods, but they would have been highly visible to those providing and seeking services.

As a planner, I was pleased to learn more about the neighborhoods in which these charitable buildings were located. Gutman supplies by including insurance maps from the Sanborn Map Company in almost every chapter. For example, the West Oakland Home and its Cottage for Babies and Small Children were located in a block adjacent to a grammar school and the Cooper AME Church. One block away was a Catholic church, school, and convent, along with a dwelling for the priest, and a Protestant church and parsonage. Several blocks south were the Fannie Wall Children’s Home (founded by African Americans Fannie Wall and Lucinda Tilghman), the Catholic St. Vincent’s Day Home, and the “colored” YMCA. In addition to dwellings, these neighborhoods included several churches for whites, a “colored” YWCA, and a Catholic youth center. Parts of West Oakland, then, were integrated in terms of both race and religion.

Even a successful institution could face opposition. Welfare officials, for example, were wary of the St. Vincent’s Day Home because it was located in a repurposed building and the facility made it easier for mothers to work outside the home (291). If we replace “welfare officials” with “politicians,” feminists would claim that the same sentiments prevail today when state legislators try to close abortion clinics run by women’s rights organizations.

With the epilogue, Gutman brings the reader into the twenty-first century. She documents how urban renewal erased many of the landscapes so carefully constructed over the previous hundred years, but she also acknowledges the people who defied renewal and saved their West Oakland neighborhoods. Especially poignant is the fate of the Children’s Home. Spared by the army tanks brought in to raze the district in the 1940s, the building that housed the institution was turned into a family-oriented public arts and recreation center in 1949. The city invested in “creative childhood” by funding the Studio One Arts Center in the former orphanage. Maintenance was neglected for many years, but starting in 2001, private fund-raising, successful placement on the National Register of Historic Places, and passage of a $10 million city bond issue restored the building. Studio One reopened in 2008, “showing that once again Oakland has been remade through repurposing buildings for children” (349).

This is a well-written book, more accessible than many social histories because Gutman mixes theoretical references to Foucault with colloquial language (e.g., using “children” interchangeably with “kids”). She pays attention to the intersection of economic, political, and architectural history, as when she acknowledges the connection between real estate cycles and the ways women saved many places from speculative development. Gutman also weaves together the stories of whites and blacks, native- and foreign-born, and Catholics and Protestants. The book’s style and comprehensive coverage make it appropriate for undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of urban history and women’s history.

The only minor quibble I have with the book concerns the subtitle. Although it indicates a discussion spanning the hundred years from 1850 to 1950, the majority of the chapters are weighted heavily toward the mid-nineteenth century. There is very little about the 1920s and 1930s until chapter 8, and the 1940s appear mainly in chapter 9 and the epilogue.

The book raises timely questions in an era of government budget cutbacks affecting social services. Now that the majority of American women are in the labor force, who will construct the charitable landscape? Children are still dependent, of course, but the elderly—most of whom are women—are the current and future constituency in need of care. Today, the scarcity of independent living options for the older population is matched by the scarcity of women volunteers.

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Note

David Van Zanten, ed.
Marion Mahony Reconsidered
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 192 pp., 4 color and 65 b/w illus. $50 (cloth), ISBN 9780226850818

In the early 1990s the International Astronomical Union posted a call for names of “deceased women who have made outstanding or fundamental contributions to their field” for use in the designation of craters more than 20 kilometers in diameter on Venus. As the education director at the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation at the time, I formally nominated architect Marion Mahony Griffin. While, unfortunately, there is yet no crater on Venus that officially carries her name, Mahony (1871–1961) has finally begun receiving the recognition she deserves for her contributions to the field of architecture in the early twentieth century.

Much of our previous understanding of this talented, yet marginalized, architect was the consequence of explorations into the lives and careers of two progressive male designers with whom she worked—Frank Lloyd Wright and Walter Burley Griffin. That a gendered penumbra continues to overshadow her work even today is reflected in the fact that the nonprofit associations established in Australia and the United States “to commemorate and promote a better understanding of the lives, ideals, vision and works of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin” include only the male partner in their shared name: the Walter Burley Griffin Society. That said, publications such as Marion Mahony Reconsidered have begun to fill out the story of America’s first female architect to be licensed via examination, including her personal and professional narratives and, perhaps most relevant to