
Exploring Everyday Landscapes: An Introduction

Background

Vernacular architecture studies bring together a host of scholars in related disciplines to explore the relationship of people and their everyday landscapes. Students of vernacular architecture typically come from the diverse fields of architecture, architectural history, geography, folklore, anthropology, material culture, history, archaeology, urban studies, art history, women's studies, and many other disciplines. Perhaps because the field is such an interdisciplinary endeavor, the term "vernacular" has remained somewhat ambiguous, referring to a broad range of environments and methods of analysis.¹ What students of vernacular architecture share, however, is the conviction that architecture itself is a primary source in research and that fieldwork and artifact analysis are fundamental to the interpretation of place.

The essays included in each volume of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* consist of refereed papers selected from a larger number presented at the annual meetings of the Vernacular

Architecture Forum (VAF). This volume is the most recent in a series which began in 1982, following the establishment of the VAF in 1980. It includes papers presented at the 1994 VAF meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, and the conference in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1995. These two meetings represent especially important events in the history of the organization: the Charleston meeting was a landmark in terms of sheer scale (thirty-two papers were delivered and an unprecedented number of people attended); the Ottawa meeting represented the first VAF conference held outside the United States.

Perhaps most significantly, both Charleston and Ottawa are cities ordinarily characterized as "official" or "elite" landscapes. Charleston, of course, is well known for its grand public monuments (the courthouse, city hall, churches, etc.), the single house with its distinctive piazzas, and the surrounding low-country plantations. As Carl Lounsbury remarks in his contribution to this volume, eighteenth-century Euro-American Charlestonians were four times wealthier than their

Chesapeake counterparts and six times richer than New Yorkers or Philadelphians. This concentration of wealth is reflected in the city's unique architectural heritage. We are pleased that three papers in *Perspectives*, VII address the architectural traditions of Charleston, from three different perspectives.

Similarly, as the capital city of Canada since 1857 (it was selected as such by Queen Victoria), Ottawa boasts some of Canada's finest public edifices: the parliament buildings, many foreign embassies, national museums, and distinctive hotels. As the capital, it has been home to many powerful and wealthy people. A host of well-known architects, including Ernest Cormier, Cass Gilbert, and Moshe Safdie, have had the opportunity to exhibit their skills in an array of stunning public buildings, many of which subsequently have become icons of Canadian nationalism. The original Canadian parliament buildings are considered some of the best examples in the world of the so-called "Ruskinian Gothic Revival."

Of course, monumental buildings have never been totally neglected by the VAF, but in recent years the organization and the discipline have been moving beyond a simple definition of the vernacular as common or typical buildings to embrace *both* the ordinary and extraordinary and to consider them in relationship to one another, which is, after all, how they existed in past time. Charleston and Ottawa offer opportunities to explore the social context of building in environments uniquely suited to confronting the relationship between the rich and powerful, on the one hand, and the poor and subordinated, on the other. Such places represent a vivid architectural record of these various layers of society. They forced observers to come to terms with the relationship between buildings designed by and for a powerful elite and the "other" sides of such cities.

Thus the conferences from which these essays are drawn are evidence that the association has outgrown a single vision of vernacular architecture

that consisted only of "old, rural, handmade structures built in traditional forms and materials for domestic and agricultural use."² In 1986, in her introduction to *Perspectives*, II, editor Camille Wells suggested that "pretentious buildings" could be equally worthy of attention—that vernacular architecture might offer new questions to scholars of the elite landscape—but pointed out that this notion had not been widely accepted among students of vernacular architecture. Eight years later, the Charleston meeting was the first step.

The same lesson was offered the following year in Ottawa, at a conference appropriately entitled "Capital Vernacular." There were fewer participants, but an unprecedented number of papers on Canadian topics, reflecting the association's growing international following. As had been the case in Charleston, the conference tours considered the city of Ottawa and its surrounding region through an extremely wide lens. Rather than ignoring the omnipresent power of the federal government in the capital region, VAF conference organizers emphasized power in its many manifestations on the landscape. The conference theme was the relationship between people and power, wood, and water, which implicitly referred to industrial, agricultural, residential, and government spaces constructed and controlled by a range of social classes in the National Capital Region. Participants followed construction of the Rideau Canal system, completed in 1832 to provide a connection for trade between Upper and Lower Canada. Tours also focused on the impact of industrialization on the area, including a trip to workers' housing in Hull, Quebec, the Chaudière Falls industrial and hydropower area, and Ottawa's Lowertown neighborhood.

Ottawa also marked a growing trend toward understanding architecture in a truly North American context, as recent cultural and political events (the North American Free Trade Agreement, for example) underscore. The transnational collaboration of a Canadian editor and a U.S. edi-

tor on this volume is another indication of movement in this direction, as is the inclusion of essays by Canadian scholars Richard Harris and Tania Martin. Moreover, several other essays—for example, those by Susan Fair and Geoffrey Gyrisco—acknowledge the indeterminacy of national borders for the particular building types they study. With this volume we see a move away from regionally based studies. These nineteen authors, instead, are more concerned with broad questions of class, race, and gender than with regional identities. This is particularly evident in comparison to *Perspectives, IV*, which included no fewer than ten regional case studies.

Issues

Many of the issues brought up at these two conferences are reflected in this collection of conference papers, selected, refereed, and revised from the original presentations. The relationship of vernacular forms to the socially constructed categories of class, ethnicity, gender, and race have been major preoccupations of the authors. In this particular group of essays, several scholars also explore the intertwining of religious culture with built form.

Form and Class

Taken together, the contributions in this collection contain highly suggestive implications for our understanding of the relationship between vernacular form and social class, and hence for the dynamics of social power as well. Bernard Herman shows how in colonial Charleston, the single house became an arena for status display within the context of a global mercantile economy. Within the single house, members of the mercantile elite acted out rituals of competition which reflected the culture of exchange. In a broader context, the single house also spatially expressed the salient underpinning to the region's social hierarchy: African American slavery. High

walls were meant to confine slaves; rough finishes in the service areas they inhabited unmistakably communicated their low status. By setting the single house in its proper context, Herman has gone well beyond previous treatments of this type, which focused not upon social dynamics but on style and form.

For Charleston's surrounding low-country region, Carl Lounsbury shows that Anglo-Charlestonians, more than perhaps any North American urbanites of the era, blended prevailing English fashions with local idioms. In this partial "Anglicization," they embraced not only English stylistic conventions but also English patterns of social hierarchy. Lounsbury (and Herman as well) bring to bear recent approaches to historical scholarship which emphasize the Atlantic world. Rather than treat Europe or North America in themselves, historians are recognizing that the colonial period may best be characterized as an era when peoples from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and both Atlantic shores mingled in complex patterns.³ Surely the architecture of Charleston and the low country bears eloquent testimony to this transoceanic dynamic.

The correlation between social power and vernacular forms in Charleston was fairly transparent, even if sometimes resisted or contested. But in other regions, the correlation between elite status and architectural expression was much less pronounced. In tidewater Virginia, for example, Edward Chappell and Julie Richter suggest a much weaker connection during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The local gentry controlled wealth and held political and religious office disproportionate to their numbers. Yet, they seem to have shared building traditions with their less well-to-do neighbors; their houses were small and finished in comparatively modest fashion. Chappell and Richter have further advanced along a path first blazed by Henry Glassie in his landmark study *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*.⁴ In that work, Glassie had suggested

that folk builders drew from a complex set of spatial templates passed on from generation to generation. Based around a common module of consistent dimensions, these templates expressed shared proxemic values. That is, they generated spaces in which people felt most comfortable given their cultural preferences (for example, preferences regarding social or private space). Chappell and Richter add depth and nuance to our understanding of the culture of building in eighteenth-century Virginia, putting these simple buildings into a socioeconomic setting. Their findings significantly challenge our conventional association of social elites with the famous mansions constructed by the Carter and Byrd families. The paper also raises intriguing questions as to what prompted later, more emphatic connections between display and power.

Clifton Ellis's article on the architecture of religious dissent in eighteenth-century Piedmont Virginia presses this point further. In this case, "the Anglican gentry of Halifax County were not interested in differentiating space according to a social hierarchy. Although some of these houses made substantial claims on the resources of their owners, plans show that their claims to status did not extend to creating social barriers, processional spaces, or genteel rooms for entertainment." The reason, Ellis argues, was that architectural expression in Halifax County was "dictated not by the Anglican elite, but by a dissenting sect of Evangelicals." The emerging cultural dominance of the Evangelicals reflected the rise of a class of middling planters whose "social status did not match their economic status." The Anglican elite did not share religious beliefs with the Evangelicals, but found it politic to adopt the Baptists' proxemic language.

In these two Virginia cases we have a fascinating counterpoint to Charleston. The Piedmont elite eschewed the very "social barriers" and "genteel spaces" developed by Charlestonians with such passion. Certainly, we learn about so-

cial power from the homes of the Piedmont, but we also realize that it did not take predictable forms. The contrasts between Charleston and Virginia should remind scholars not to make quick assumptions that elite status will inevitably be expressed in opulence and spatial hierarchy. It is also interesting to speculate on why these contrasts emerged. Was it because Charlestonians operated in much closer proximity to the global mercantile world and because their black-majority slave economy required oppressive social controls, buttressed by overt demonstrations of power? These factors might predispose Charlestonians to attach greater value both to the artifacts of trade and to the emphatic architectural display of power. To be sure, Piedmont residents owned slaves, and they participated in the global market economy too. But their dependence on trade and slaves never reached the same extent as it did in South Carolina. Trade involvement was carried on through middlemen rather than directly; moreover, as a more diversified economy developed in the eighteenth century, Tidewater and inland dwellers did not depend on transatlantic trade to the same degree as did their South Carolina counterparts. And since a more diversified agriculture challenged a staple crop economy, neither did they depend upon slavery to the same extent.

These analyses of Charleston and the Virginia Piedmont contribute to our more general understanding of vernacular architecture in the colonial period. Several scholars, for example, have argued for a trend toward "Anglicization" in colonial culture. Some argue that this may have extended to architecture. Archaeologist James Deetz contends that the emergence of the formal Georgian style is evidence for a "re-Anglicized popular culture of America on the eve of the Revolution."⁵ He cites the external symmetry and internal, formal social spaces of New England houses such as the Mott House in Rhode Island and suggests that the pattern was part of a larger

movement which occurred, in different guises, from South Carolina to New England in a variety of structures, ranging from plantation houses to merchants' dwellings. Kevin Sweeney's analysis of the buildings erected by the Connecticut Valley "River Gods" and their successors convincingly sets out a local variation on this pattern. Sweeney's findings, however, focus not on a "popular" culture but on local elites.

But this notion of Anglicization has been debated; indeed, the colonies' Anglo-American population was a minority by about 1750. In areas dominated by non-English immigrants, different patterns may have prevailed. For example, Henry Glassie advances a caution about the impact of the Georgian revolution; hidden behind formal, Georgian facades of Pennsylvania's Delaware Valley were traditional social spaces. William Woys Weaver has analyzed some of these spaces in an article entitled "The Pennsylvania German House." The *stube*, or stove room, was preeminent among the rooms Weaver examined, and it persisted as a characteristically Pennsylvania German space.⁶

In *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700–1900*, Bernard L. Herman found a still more complex set of transformations. External asymmetry and undifferentiated internal space gave way, by the late eighteenth century, to a new spatial order which included Georgian symmetry, separate entryway and stair passages, and separate kitchens, together communicating a new class order. Yet, inventories show that the functions of these spaces were not as precise as their arrangement suggested, thus Herman infers that people still *used* space in traditional ways. Like the people of the Virginia Piedmont, then, Delaware residents used space to assimilate change, in very complex and occasionally inconsistent ways.

In future work, scholars thus will want to follow the suggestive path these works have laid out. How extensive was the transformation of space

in colonial America? How did the nature and extent of the changes wrought relate to the specific regional or local context? Certainly by the time of the Revolution, it would seem that elite Americans had developed a shared visual language. Yet, they clung to sharply variable proxemic values and interior interpretations. Did these lines of sharing and division have parallels in other realms? Most obviously, it would seem as if the tension between locality and nation in the Early Republic and antebellum period was manifested not only politically but culturally. Vernacular architecture may thus serve as a means of linking up the dynamics of political culture.

As a capitalist economy emerged in the nineteenth century and later, the relationship between vernacular forms and power assumed yet more new shapes. Employers in different regions and times sought to control their work force in various ways. Laborers responded with a variety of strategies, ranging from outright rebellion (which was relatively uncommon) to subtle resistance or accommodation. Analyzing the struggles over building and space can offer revealing insights into these ever-changing social relationships. In nineteenth-century Delaware, for example, the emergence of a "free labor" system brought with it a new housing form: the house and garden. Rebecca Siders and Anna Andrzejewski explore the emergence and implications of this new form. Farm laborers, some recently released from chattel slavery, now had to contend with the vagaries of wage labor and tenant status, but a separate house and garden, provided by the landlords who employed them, also afforded them some autonomy and means for subsistence. "Both parties possessed something the other needed very badly, giving them each some power and authority in the relationship." Landlord/tenant relationships were flexible, but the limits of tenant influence were always implicitly understood; the "authority of the landowner" prevailed.

These Delaware agrarian patterns can be

profitably compared with others in different regions of the country. In the Northeast and Midwest, the relevant comparison is not so much with other forms of tenancy (in which farm tenants usually rented land which they farmed) as with the changed relationship between farmers and their hired laborers. All over the North, a shift occurred from shared work (in which laborers were often neighbors or kin, and often worked as part of local in-kind exchange systems) to wage labor (in which laborers, mainly immigrants, worked for cash wages). Class differences became more pronounced, and with this social stratification came spatial segregation; workers were increasingly isolated within the farmhouse proper (for example, in separate attic bedrooms with independent access). More often, they were excluded altogether and were required to find their own room and board. Though their class status was perhaps deteriorating, farm laborers also found a measure of autonomy in these new arrangements; no longer were they directly under the eye of an employer throughout the day and night.

In the Cotton South, the system which evolved in the post-emancipation struggle also differed substantially from the Delaware "house and garden." As the staple-crop economy slid into overproduction, poverty, and repression, sharecropping tenants received shelter, but little more; in fact, contracts often explicitly forbade tenants from having gardens. Landlords forbade gardens partly to consolidate their control over tenants (black and white) by depriving them of a key element toward self-sufficiency. Landowners felt they had little choice but to allocate every spare acre to cash-crop production because they, in turn, were being squeezed by northern creditors.⁷

Set within this context, the "house and garden" approach appears as an unusually formal and measured response to the new realities of agrarian labor. Tenants had less freedom than their counterparts among Northern farm laborers to organize

their own domestic and garden space, but they had far more autonomy than sharecropping tenants farther South. It is tempting to speculate that this form was especially appropriate to the peculiar "middle ground" of the Upper South, where slavery and freedom had intertwined in such complex ways during the antebellum years.⁸ More research, however, is needed before we can thoroughly understand the changing architecture of agricultural work and workers.

By the twentieth century, lumber magnates in the Pacific Northwest experimented with the built environment in their quest to secure a stable, cooperative labor force. Company towns such as Scotia, California, represent ideas of "welfare capitalism" (in which corporations provided various benefits to employees such as health services, educational programs, and housing) realized in physical form. While some elements represented control, even coercion (for example, the elimination of company saloons), others (for instance, hospitals) catered to workers' real needs and perhaps even deflected worker resistance. James Buckley concludes that "[i]f we measure redwood workers' contentment by the subsequent record of labor unrest, then mill owners' extra investment in company towns seems to have paid a significant dividend."

Scotia was just one of hundreds of company towns scattered throughout the country. Some experienced a quiescence similar to Scotia's; the Endicott-Johnson company towns in southern New York State come to mind. Others, however—such as Pullman, Illinois, or mining towns in the Appalachian region—were torn by constant labor strife. Future comparative study will investigate how corporations' urban planning efforts contributed to these very different outcomes. Investigation is needed of how industry-wide conditions, market competition, labor law, and individual corporate policies influenced building programs.

The examples of both agrarian Delaware and

the northwestern lumbering industry reveal employers making some concessions to workers, but always catering to a strong element of self-interest and ultimately holding the upper hand. Other cases, however, illustrate how middle- and working-class people took the initiative to shape environments that suited their own needs, in the process stating implicit alternatives to the dominant modes of social and cultural power. In late-twentieth-century America, older commercial strips have been superseded by huge malls, and the abandoned strips have been refashioned by immigrants and working-class people. The new uses to which these strips have been put are evidence of creativity and resourcefulness. They also can be read, as Tim Davis points out, as challenges to elitist notions of preservation and as emblems of “relative freedom from authority.”

But even middle-class suburbia harbored more variety than is commonly assumed. Richard Harris has found that in many American and Canadian suburbs of the early to mid twentieth century, a significant proportion of homes—as many as 25 percent—were owner-built, not mass-produced. This suggests a degree of resistance to the standardized consumer culture. It also suggests questions for further study. For example, were as many homes owner-built in other suburbs? If so, what are the implications for our interpretation of suburbia? Have suburbs been less homogeneous than previously thought, at least in terms of class? To what extent (if at all) did this suburban experience modify prescriptive norms for bourgeois “domesticity”? The very term “middle-class domesticity” is coming increasingly into question among historians, as we learn more about “real” domestic lives as opposed to prescription.⁹ Like this accumulating body of conventional historical evidence, the emerging vernacular architecture record suggests that “domesticity” has taken a wide variety of forms.

If Harris’s findings suggest alternatives to consumer culture, Pamela Simpson’s analysis of what she calls the “democratic” floor coverings—linoleum and Lincrusta—reveals users’ enthusiastic participation; the widespread popularity of these floor coverings was at least partly due to the classic tactics of advertising and marketing. But, at the same time, implicit in the popularity of “faux” floor coverings was a hearty rejection of elite aesthetic standards. Again, issues of cultural power and social class come to the fore.

Thus, by organizing space, style, and ornament, people have communicated both power and resistance. Since colonial times, a continual contest has taken place, and social groupings formed and reformed in different ways. The built environment offers clues as to how this process has played out in specific contexts. The essays collected here possess rich implications for future directions of research into the connections between building forms and power structures. For example, in the colonial period, did architecture in other regions show the same variety of configurations between form and power as existed in Charleston and Virginia? Did differences in economy and society assert themselves spatially? How? As the economy and the architecture produced within it modernized, did conflict over building form assume similar contours regardless of region?

Form and Ethnicity

Our understanding of the connection between building and ethnicity has undergone significant revision over the years, but many scholars still hold that ethnicity can be a useful category for analysis—recognizing, however, that it is socially constructed as much as is gender or race.¹⁰ The essays in this volume suggest a variety of associations between ethnic identity (however constructed) and building form. Susan Fair, for example, analyzes the storage caches of Alaska. These structures—consisting of small huts elevated on posts—figure prominently in both the

Native American landscape and in Native American legend as symbols of cultural identity, security, generosity, and achievement. Euro-American immigrants to Alaska, however, also appropriated the cache motif as a symbol of their own identity as Alaskans. The Euro-American interpretation of the cache often took a highly commercialized form, as the cache motif was used in advertising, and actually commodified through souvenirs, paintings, and the like.

Geoffrey Gyrisco shows how the architecture of East Slavs in America was even more malleable, yet still functioned as a distinctive ethnic "marker" in the landscape. Such buildings as St. Mary's Church in Minneapolis represented a syncretistic combination of Russian and American architectural conventions; the American flag, for example, was suspended with traditional icon church banners. Many Eastern European immigrants, moreover, fashioned ethnic identities not necessarily congruent with those of ethnic groups in their geographic region of origin; thus, in America people who called themselves "Russians" would not have been recognized as such by Russians in the Old World. Gyrisco's work contributes to a growing body of scholarship which examines the ways in which ethnicity was fabricated—in this case, quite literally.

By contrast, according to author Ruth Little, the African American middle class did not make such overt attempts to express ethnicity in building form. She points out the dangers of searching for Africanisms in African American architecture. "Many African-Americans," she suggests, "would be surprised to learn that their architecture is sometimes considered ethnic." Was architecture, in this case, part of a conscious strategy to assimilate, at least outwardly? How did architecture figure in the debates within the African American community about accommodation versus resistance to the oppressive social order of segregation and discrimination? How did African-American architecture fit

within the context of patterns in food, music, and other forms of popular culture? What might Little's model offer for continuing research on other subcultures such as those in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, or (for that matter) Pennsylvania German Lancaster County? Perhaps this is the time for scholars of vernacular architecture to reconsider the search for ethnic distinctiveness and to probe more carefully the relationship between ethnicity and spatial form.

Form and Gender

Issues of gender are a more recent concern of vernacular architecture scholars than class and ethnicity. In fact, it was not until the publication of *Perspectives, IV* in 1991 that a number of papers addressed the role of gender in our understanding of ordinary buildings and landscapes. Four years later, the editors and authors of *Perspectives, V* embraced gender as a major category of analysis; this was reflected in the volume's subtitle, *Gender, Class, and Shelter*.

Like the development of gender studies in the field of architectural history, the feminist critique of vernacular architecture studies has evolved from an early search for the roles of women as designers of buildings and places to a more complex questioning of the ways that men and women may perceive space differently. This recent line of inquiry has proven difficult for scholars of ordinary environments. As Carolyn Torma and her co-author in volume IV, Rebecca Sample Bernstein, explained, "when one turns to primary source material, a major stumbling block is encountered." Women are seldom acknowledged in the traditional sources of vernacular architecture studies: maps, tax records, diaries, local histories, etc. As a result of this absence of women in the conventional historical record, many scholars interested in gender have turned to alternative sources, such as photographs and oral histories, to illuminate women's experience of the built environment. Vernacular architecture scholars con-

cerned with gender have thus absorbed the lessons of work on other hitherto invisible people, while at the same time exploring new methodological approaches for this ever-growing category of architectural analysis.

For example, gender studies published in previous volumes of *Perspectives* relied heavily upon prescriptive literature as a key to women's spatial experiences. Popular magazines and other forms of advice literature written for women offered scholars of the built environment tantalizing glimpses of how real spaces may have affected the everyday lives of ordinary women. Leland Roth, for example, in volume IV, showed how the *Ladies' Home Journal* popularized the private house and foreshadowed the huge success of the mail-order house industry before and after World War I.

Using similar evidence, Janet Hutchison in *Perspectives, II* looked at the campaign in the 1920s and 1930s to reform housing, Better Homes in America, which was intended to improve the lot of women in the home through better design. Both these essays were typical of this early work in their use of popular printed sources to interpret popular house types.

In *Perspectives, V*, gender issues converged with vernacular architecture studies in a major way. The volume included pointed discussions of methodological issues and also repeated reminders that "gender" is not synonymous with "women," but rather refers to the ways in which cultures construct the biological realities of sexual difference. First, pioneering work on the spaces of masculinity were included in *Perspectives, V*, such as Deryck Holdsworth's and William Moore's essays on distinctly masculine environments. Indeed, the real mark of maturity in the authors' analyses of gender issues was that most of the essays in the volume included gender in the context of other concerns (though not necessarily the central issue) in their investigation.

Perhaps as a further development of this con-

textual way of thinking, *Perspectives, VII* includes fewer papers on gender per se. Several essays, however, build on the pioneering work in previous issues and suggest new avenues for understanding how gender affects ordinary buildings. Tania Martin, for instance, casts a new light on the ubiquitous Quebec convent; her work also serves to underline how "vernacular" is as much an approach to the material as a building type. The convent is a monument, but by looking at the drawings of a resident nun (rather than at those of the architect), Martin shows how this superficially patriarchal institution actually functioned as a type of cooperative housing. Martin concludes: "Clearly the nuns did not fit into the neat construction of the 'separate spheres' theory, as their own work and physical environment breached the clear divisions of male and female, public and private, active and passive." In this case, incorporating gender into the analysis has meant a complete inversion of our former understanding of the building type.

Other authors have incorporated gender into more general studies of a particular material, building, or community type, confirming Kwolek-Folland's suggestion that making gender a standard avenue of inquiry can only enrich our interpretations of every landscapes. William Moore, for example, in his study of New England's spiritualist camp meetings, points out how such places permitted the expansion of the "boundaries of behavior prescribed by American society." Spiritualist organizations, like the Montreal convents, offered women new leadership roles unavailable to them in other realms. In the spiritualist camps, this meant that certain days were set aside for the discussion of the political advancement of women, clearly blurring the limits of religious and political activity. In the case of both the convent and the spiritualist camp, then, spaces seemingly designed for religious purposes may have led to more choices in the secular lives of women.

The use of spaces, too, often operate quite dif-

ferently according to gender. Susan Fair shows how caches in Alaska, for example, were used variously by women and men. While men typically stored tools or supported vehicles in caches, women used them to store fish or furs. Gendered patterns of work and identity show up vividly in Fair's case study, as when Athabaskan people prohibited others from even touching caches belonging to members of the opposite sex.

Form and Race

Similarly, recent scholarship has emphasized the degree to which race is a socially constructed category rather than having any biological basis. Several essays in this volume provide insights into how racial lines were literally constructed into the fabric of the American built environment. In colonial Charleston, of course, the prevailing racial order was clear in the spatial organization of walled compounds, slave quarters, and back-alley gathering places. In central Delaware, emancipation brought a different racial order, one in which African American wage laborers achieved a measure of autonomy but were pointedly placed on the margins of landowners' property; this pattern can be compared with post-emancipation spatial organization of sharecropping farther South, in which the concentrated slave "quarter" gave way to dispersed sharecroppers' cabins.¹¹ As middle-class African Americans experienced disfranchisement and segregation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century South, they constructed housing that was visually indistinguishable from middle-class neighborhoods anywhere in the United States, pointing to the complex intersection of class and race in American society. The ironies are further reinforced by Richard Harris's suggestion that American suburbs were less homogenous than previously thought with respect to class, because suburbs continued to be racially exclusive.

Form and Religious Culture

Just as vernacular forms can aid in the understanding of class, gender, and racial structures, they can help us interpret the expression of religious values. In antebellum New Orleans, for example, Dell Upton shows how the profound ceremonies of death as enacted within the urban cemetery—the "city of the dead"—reflected the urban community of the living. The Grey Nuns of Montréal used their ability to organize space to express a strong religious identity and community. Tania Martin argues that within this community, women achieved a measure of autonomy impossible in the discriminatory secular society. By contrast, William Moore finds that Yankee spiritualists' attempts to create spaces congruent with their beliefs foundered under the weight of ambiguity.

Perhaps it is a coincidence, but it is worth noting that the more successful of these attempts to merge environment with religious culture came from within Catholicism. Perhaps Catholics exploited their rich institutional and ritual history to fashion vernacular spaces. The spiritualists, on the other hand, lacked any such history and, moreover, were likely handicapped by the anti-authoritarian nature of their beliefs.

These patterns recall those analyzed by Dolores Hayden in *Seven American Utopias*.¹² Builders in these American communitarian experiments used a variety of means to express corporate beliefs. The Shakers, for example, successfully balanced discipline with release by making a mix of highly organized spaces and more flexible ones. Their shared beliefs and carefully organized (if unconventional) gender system contributed to a coherent building plan. The Fourierists, on the other hand, failed to combine conventional sociability with a fundamental challenge to the dominant social order, and their experiment failed both spatially and socially. These experiences all remind us that enduring vernacular

forms generally result from a complex mix which grows from both cultural expression and original design.

Design Versus Use

Cutting across social categories and institutions, yet another theme in contemporary vernacular architecture studies stresses how people who use buildings appropriate space in ways quite different from those intended by designers. When Charleston's slave owners erected walls and quarters, slaves found breathing room in the back alleys. Standardized forms of commercial strips were appropriated for uses quite different from those of the original occupants. Office workers modified the open, architect-designed spaces by creating partitions and other barriers. All of these essays are richly suggestive for showing the way to analyzing how space is continually negotiated.

While these contests are often waged along class, ethnic, gender, or racial lines, the lines between designer and user are also worth considering. Architects, landlords, and corporations often set the original shape of a given building type; but ordinary users just as often modify or challenge these spatial prescriptions. They do this through various devices, such as Carolyn Torma's "informal codes" or through an outright reorganization of space. Thus, an expanding field for students of the vernacular is in asking how people respond to buildings designed by professionals or generated by standardized, corporate planning.

And still beyond this model of design and response, there is room to investigate the continual interactions between designers and their audience. As scholars continue to chip away at the conceptual lines between "vernacular" and "high style," new avenues of inquiry open up. Just as elements of "high style" design have been incorporated into everyday buildings, professional architects and planners have drawn from shared culture and values as well.

Whatever the specific subject, the body of work contained in this volume also points to an even more intensified interdisciplinary approach in vernacular architecture studies. The implications for history scholarship, for instance, are many. Roman Catholic nuns' ability to shape their own spaces, for instance, offers insights for the debate in women's history over the relevance of the "separate spheres" model. The urban cemetery becomes a vehicle for a new understanding of American urbanization in general. Tracing the actual pattern of owner-built housing in North American suburbs puts to the test assumptions about standardization and homogeneity and, in the process, forces historians to reformulate their approach to postwar culture. Gender studies, historical geography, anthropology, and women's history also will intersect with vernacular architecture studies to a greater and greater extent in the future. These essays also abundantly confirm that "vernacular" building cannot and should not be regarded as a hermetically separated category of building, studied apart from "high style," "popular," or "folk" architecture. Previous PVA editors and authors have pointed this out, but it comes across here with more force than ever.

Landscape

We hope that this collection of essays will communicate the vibrancy of vernacular architecture studies today. Along with this vigor, however, comes the potential for confusion and fragmentation, as subject matter grows ever more disparate. One conceptual idea which most vernacular architecture scholars do share, however, is the notion of landscape. This is of course not a new idea; some of the most revered pioneers of vernacular architecture studied landscapes. But it is worth making this point because rich insights may be derived from setting an individual structure into its wider building context.

Developing methodologies and approaches to

vernacular landscape, however, is a daunting task; not only because the term “landscape” is so all-encompassing, but also because landscape studies is in tremendous intellectual flux. At one time, the study of American landscapes was compartmentalized into various disciplinary pigeonholes. Art historians analyzed landscape paintings according to widely received aesthetic canons; geographers variously attempted painstakingly detailed reconstructions of past landscapes or ventured grand interpretations underpinned by the assumption of a monolithic American culture; literary scholars analyzed the landscape imagery and metaphor embodied in the classical literary canon; vernacular architecture scholars turned their attention to “common” landscapes.

In the past decades, the study of landscape has grown much more interdisciplinary and much more theoretically and methodologically contentious. While the very nature of the subject always made cross-disciplinary forays necessary, increasingly the boundary lines are not simply being crossed but are being challenged, even obliterated. Now the scholar who is interested in landscape is likely to find work which addresses literary and artistic representations together or which probes the symbolic import of built structures, interpreting buildings as texts. Aesthetically based evaluation has given way to locating the cultural roots of the aesthetic itself and to placing landscape painting in its cultural and ideological context. From this approach, important insights have emerged about many hitherto unstudied aspects of landscape; for example, scholars have advanced provocative arguments about the cultural and political significance of Anglo-American landscape painting.

In addition to dealing with the increased fluidity of disciplinary boundaries, all students of the historical landscape have been vigorously challenged to rethink their methods and

theoretical assumptions. The assault on long-held conventions was inspired principally by more general intellectual and social currents, themselves potentially in tension with one another. Among the forces driving these massive re-evaluations was the social ferment of the 1960s and 1970s, in which dominant class, gender, and racial structures were questioned. Scholars became aware that landscapes are manipulated to enforce or contest power and authority. At the same time, another challenge to scholarly methods and theoretical frameworks came from postmodern thought, which challenged the modern paradigm of knowledge, positing the Western ideal of “objectivity” itself as a subjective, ideological construct.

Influenced by postmodern thought, many scholars of landscape have turned their attention to the visual and verbal languages of landscape representation. Some would hold that *all* landscapes (whether material, visual, or literary) are representations, and thus that analysis need concern itself *only* with representation. Others see landscape representation as inflexibly dictated by socioeconomic context, especially power relationships, and so conclude that interpretation must reach to the social background as the ultimate “reality.”¹³ Regardless of their specific ideological stances, most stress the transitory, deceptive, subjective nature of representations.

These swirling currents of thought pose a vigorous challenge to vernacular architecture studies, which is, after all, irrevocably committed to documenting and interpreting the built environment. Clearly, vernacular architecture studies will continue to be grounded in materialist assumptions. As such, perhaps vernacular architecture scholarship may serve as a corrective to the tendency in some interpretations of landscape representation to ignore (or even deny) actual geologic features, biota, buildings, and field patterns. Careful documentation of the material record can

offer important insights for inquiry into the cultural dimensions of landscape, for without knowing what was on the land it is difficult, even misleading, to make conclusions about how it was represented.

Of course the ultimate goal of vernacular architecture studies is not to reconstruct a physical landscape but to interpret it. If it has been hesitant fully to embrace postmodern epistemology, the discipline has been centrally involved in the movement away from monolithic interpretations of American thought and culture—and thus of landscape also. Because vernacular architecture scholars approach the built environment as a cultural product, they inescapably confront how built landscapes are shaped by the social, political, economic, and cultural structures of the people who produce them. And historians of the last few generations have demonstrated abundantly that American society has not been monolithic but fragmentary and often conflicted, its landscapes a scene for ever-shifting contests and negotiations among different groups. Future studies can make a significant contribution to understanding the complex dynamic between the

physical makeup of landscapes and the cultural processes of representation.

Several of the essays in this volume point to such explorations. Bruce Harvey has analyzed the architecture of Charleston's 1901–2 exposition. Charleston's business leaders attempted to create a landscape which symbolized a thriving industrial future for the city and region. But their attempt failed: the exposition landscape was egregiously anomalous in the context of the city's culture and the region's political economy. Northern California lumber magnates, on the other hand, seem to have achieved more success in their quest to reproduce in the company town a "factory without a roof." Perhaps it is significant that the company town landscape (unlike the largely imaginary Exposition landscape) grew out of pre-existing industrial conditions in the forest economy of the Northwest.

We hope that, taken together, the essays in *Perspectives*, VII will help scholars to move forward with the study of vernacular buildings in their physical, intellectual, and cultural contexts. We invite readers now to join in exploring a diverse, dynamic collection of everyday landscapes.

Notes

1. The development of the field has been outlined in the introductions of earlier volumes in this series; see also Dell Upton, "Ordinary Buildings: A Bibliographical Essay on American Vernacular Architecture," *American Studies International* 19 (Winter 1981): 57–75, and "The Power of Things: Recent Studies in American Vernacular Architecture," *American Quarterly* 35 (1983): 262–79.
2. See Camille Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, II, ed. Camille Wells (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986), 1.
3. See, for example, the new series published by Johns Hopkins University Press on Atlantic history and culture.
4. Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1975).
5. James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1977), 112; see also David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the 17th Century* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991); Rhys Isaac, *The Transfor-*

- mation of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1982); and Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986).
6. Henry Glassie, "Eighteenth-Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building," *Winterthur Portfolio* 7 (1972): 29–59; William Woys Weaver, "The Pennsylvania German House," *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (1986): 243–64; Bernard L. Herman, *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700–1900* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1987).
 7. See, for example, Theodore Rosengarten, ed. *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York: Knopf, 1974).
 8. Barbara Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985).
 9. See Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History." *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988): 9–39; Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990).
 10. See Bernard Bailyn and Philip Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991).
 11. Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750–1925* (New York: Random House, 1976).
 12. Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790–1975* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976).
 13. See Angela Miller's helpful essay, "Magisterial Visions: Recent Anglo-American Scholarship on the Represented Landscape," *American Quarterly* 47 (Mar. 1995): 140–51. Miller calls for a "fusion" of approaches which would "resolve the dichotomy between internal and external, text and context, form and history."