

## Abstracts of Periodical Literature

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*These abstracts are selected from personal scrutiny of a large number of archaeological, architectural, art and historical journals which reflect our interests and, we hope, those of readers. Where an abstract forms part of an original publication, it is generally used, but it is often edited to bring out those aspects of the content which are likely to be of particular interest to readers of this journal. Where no abstract is provided, we have done our best to summarise the content and thrust of the argument.*

*Readers are referred to the very comprehensive bibliography published annually as a supplement to Technology and Culture, the journal of the Society of the History of Technology (SHOT) whose valuable articles are so often abstracted in this section.*

*We are very grateful to readers who have sent offprints of their own publications for abstracting in this journal. If readers are aware of papers published in journals which do not appear in our sphere of interest and reading, we would be most grateful for the opportunity to follow up on such suggestions.*

J. S. ALLEN, **A short history of 'Lamella' roof construction**, *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1999-2000), pp. 1-30. The Lamella arched roof was widely employed in Europe, North America and the UK during the 1920s and 1930s, and before its very recent revival had its final public outing at the Festival of Britain where it provided the roof for the "Sea & Ships" building. Developed originally in post-World War I Germany by Friedrich Reinhart Baltasar Zollinger (1880-1945), it provided a very economical timber Gothic arch for roofing low cost housing - the economy residing in its ability to provide large spans from standard sized, but relatively short planks (the Lamellas). The Lamellas vary in thickness and depth depending upon the span, but are identical for any given span. Curved on their top edges and bevelled at the ends which are radial to the curvature, they are bolted together on edge with the curved side uppermost to form a rhomboid network of framing timbers. Later applications of timber Lamella arches spanned as far as the 155 feet width of the St Louis Exhibition Hall of 1929, while a steel Lamella roof for the Austin Motor Company spanned 180 feet in 1936. Widely used for bus garages and aircraft hangars for its efficiency, speed of construction and the need for only modest temporary supports during assembly, it was superseded by lattice girders and welded portal frames in the 1950s.

ERIC H. ASH, **"A perfect and absolute work": Expertise, Authority, and the Rebuilding of Dover Harbour, 1579-1583**, *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 239-268. The rebuilding of Dover harbour was one of the great domestic technical achievements of Elizabeth I's long reign. The project involved hundreds of day labourers, overseers, and officers who worked throughout the 1580s and early 1590s building a variety of breakwaters, dams and sluices designed to keep a vital commercial and military port from silting up. At a purely technical level the project contains considerable interest. However, the author is concerned primarily with questions of control. How does government decide whom to trust with an expensive and confusing project? By locating the problem of expertise early in Britain's centralised monarchy, Ash shows that the counterclaims of competing experts - now common in courts and hearing rooms - predates industrialization. Fiscal authority required that the Privy Council in London choose a project director who could redesign this difficult harbour and stay within budget. The answer lay in the use of expert mediators, with ties to the Privy Council and to Dover, who performed essential service in sorting out the several project proposals, some foolish, some expensive, one

ultimately effective. Enter Thomas Digges, Cambridge-educated mathematician, soldier, politician and Kentish landowner who amongst the competing claimants to the role of "expert" alone possessed all of the connections, skills and experience to play an effective role at every level of project administration.

JOHN K. BROWN, **Design Plans, Working Drawings, National Styles: Engineering Practice in Great Britain and the United States, 1775-1945**, *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 195-238. During the summer of 1940, a British purchasing commission to United States placed an order for sixty 10,000 ton merchant vessels urgently needed to replace the losses to German U-boats. To save time, complete sets of plans were given to the US shipyards but to the dismay of all concerned the British ship and engine plans proved essentially meaningless to managers and workers at the American yards in stark contradiction of the widely held belief that technical drawings were a "universal language". Even the visual language of engineering, it was found, derived its meanings from culture - from the values, institutions, and social relations of its creators and users. This article examines the development and uses of mechanical drawings to uncover the cultural beliefs and political ends of engineers who wielded this outwardly rational instrument of their professional practice. Although based on mechanical engineering, the approach adopted here has much to offer construction historians who are more likely to be handling civil engineering or even architectural drawings.

PRISCILLA CONNOLLY, **Pearson and Public Works Construction in Mexico, 1890-1910**, *Business History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (October 1999), pp. 48-71. The firm of S. Pearson and Son, forerunner to the present-day Pearsons PLC, which is mainly known for its world-wide interests in the entertainment, publishing and information industries - Thames TV, FT, Penguin Books - and previously for wine (Chateau Latour), banking (Lazards), steel (Dorman Long) and oil, started as builders and general works contractors in the 1860s and emerged as a global enterprise mainly on the strength of public works contracts undertaken for the Mexican government between 1889 and 1906. This article looks at how this business operated, analysing the capital flows through the contracts. These involved substantial quantities of public debt, mostly in the form of silver bonds. The very favourable terms achieved by Pearson and the fact that he built all the largest public works projects, suggest that he enjoyed a virtual monopoly over this kind of contract in Mexico. Some explanations of this are examined, together with their possible implications regarding technology transfers and modelling the future development of the Mexican construction industry. All of this had begun with Samuel Pearson, a Yorkshire brickmaker and builder from 1844, his son George who joined the expanding partnership in 1856, whose son Weetman Dickenson Pearson, the future Lord Cowdray (born 1856), presided over the activity described in this article. Although the construction industry has its giants, it is salutary to be reminded that the biggest multinationals - where they involved construction - sometimes use it more as a springboard than as a foundation.

ALICE T. FRIEDMAN, **The Way You Do the Things You Do: Writing the History of Houses and Housing**, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (September 1999), pp. 406-13. Over the last twenty years, the history of housing has been much influenced by new theoretical perspectives. Formal architectural analysis has been enriched by a growing understanding of the social values of those who built or lived in different housing types. Mark Girouard showed how interesting these new perspectives could be in his study *Life in the English Country House*, without recourse to any obvious theoretical apparatus. In this general review article, Alice Friedman discusses how the post-Girouard generation has brought theory into play, especially in research on vernacular and popular house types and she provides a useful bibliography of recent publications in this area.

THOMAS W. HANCHETT, **Financing Suburbia: Prudential Insurance and the Post-World War II Transformation of the American City**, *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (March 2000), pp. 312-328. In addition to the growth in personal mobility, mortgage insurance and the baby boom which are conventionally held to have fuelled the growth of suburbia, Thomas Hanchett identifies a fourth factor - innovations in financing that provided dollars for development on a scale previously unknown. His article explores the activities of the largest single player in the little-known financing revolution, the Prudential Insurance Company of America. Prudential supplied the money for a surprising number of the landmark projects that redefined suburban America in the 1940s and 1950s, including Levittown, the pioneering enclosed Southdale Mall (near Minneapolis), and Dallas's much-publicised Brook Hollow Industrial Park. Prudential was ranked as the nation's biggest mortgage lender in the postwar period and also emerged as America's largest private owner of retail property. The company's internal magazine, the *Prudential Mortgage Loan Mirror*, is a source untapped by historians that offers a glimpse of Prudential's activities and the ideas that guided its reshaping of the North American landscape.

RICHARD HARRIS, **More American than the United States: Housing in Urban Canada in the Twentieth Century**, *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (May 2000), pp. 456-478. It has only recently become possible to make broad historical comparisons between housing markets in Canada and the United States. For many years the United States has had a substantial body of literature on the economic and social history of housing, while in Canada much less has been written. The 1990s, however, saw Canadian housing history come of age with the publication of the first overall histories, detailed studies of federal policy, a comprehensive overview of Canadian housing since World War II, as well as more detailed studies of provincial housing (Alberta), housing politics in Vancouver, and book length studies of an English-Canadian suburb (Nepean in Ottawa), and suburban Toronto. Specific issues such as prefabrication, boarding and lodging, the sources of residential finance, self-build and cooperative self-help projects, and the impact of federal housing initiatives have all received detailed analytical coverage. Harris's article is a good deal more than a review article, but serves a useful purpose in bringing all of this material together in a well referenced survey of a field which has considerable potential value to construction historians.

M. J. B. HISLOP, **A Medieval Building Contract from Storeton, Wirral**, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, Vol. 74 (1996-97), pp. 115-21. Building contracts, although often frustratingly incomplete in detail, contribute much to our understanding of the working environment of medieval constructors. The British Library document which forms the subject of this paper was drawn up on 2 October 1372 between William de Stanley, head forester of the Wirral, and Roger de Barton, a master mason who, eleven years later, was to take charge of the Earl of Northumberland's reconstruction of Cockermouth Castle in Cumbria. Written in indifferent French and a hand markedly inferior to the elegant regularity of contemporary royal documents, it records the mason's undertaking to build five gables and two chimneys at William de Stanley's manor house at Storeton, the gables to match one already completed by another mason - William de Wyntretton - earlier in the same building project. The author reviews a number of other examples of contracts let during the course of incomplete or ongoing building programmes, transcribes and translates the indentures, and attempts to identify the works themselves.

DIANE HUTCHINSON, **The Transformation of Boral: From Dependent, Specialist Bitumen Refiner to Major Building Products Manufacturer**, *Business History*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (July 2000), pp. 109-132. Boral was formed in 1946 and soon after began bitumen production. Caltex, the overseas marketing arm of two US oil companies, played an important role in setting up this new venture and seemingly had the power to restrict it to the bitumen products segment of the petroleum industry. After

breaking free of American control, however, Boral diversified into building products with great success, first focussing on heavy construction materials (ready-mix, hot-mix asphalt, quarry products) used in road construction as well as heavy engineering, then building material (bricks, tiles and plasterboard) to its current position as one of the largest manufacturers of building products in Australia. The direction of this move across industry and market boundaries was initially set by firm-specific know-how from the company's petrochemical origins. Boral's bold leaps into apparently unrelated new industries represented the transfer of a core set of capabilities into new markets.

LARRY KEATING and CAROL A. FLORES, **Techwood Homes Transformed by Enemies and Friends**, *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (March 2000), pp. 275-311. If one discounts the munitions industry housing projects of 1917-1919, the United States's first federally subsidized public housing development was Techwood Homes in Atlanta, Georgia, which celebrated its sixtieth birthday in 1995. Two years earlier a major study of Techwood concluded that the seven two-storey townhouses and thirteen three-storey apartment buildings that had pioneered the New Deal's public housing effort not only had adequately fulfilled their sixty-year life expectancy but were fully capable of another six decades of service. Despite this assessment and the historic significance of the project, Techwood Homes was demolished in 1995. This article reviews the circumstances of Techwood's development and destruction and concludes that decisions both to build and to destroy the project were motivated primarily by concerns other than the delivery of improved housing conditions for working-class Americans. The need to provide jobs drove most New Deal projects and Techwood Homes was no exception: the need to remove what had become a high-crime neighbourhood in the vicinity of the Atlanta Olympic village drove the second decision.

PAUL LAXTON, **The Evidence of Richard Horwood's Maps for Residential Building in London 1799-1819**, *The London Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999), pp. 1-22. Horwood's map of London will be familiar to most London historians. First published in 1799 in 32 sheets, and extended in revised editions in 1807, 1813 and 1819, Horwood attempted to show, and number, every property at a scale of approximately 26 inches to the mile. For all of its faults, the map was an extraordinary performance and, until the Ordnance Survey embarked on their large-scale town maps in the 1840s, Horwood's map formed the basis for numerous commercial copies, and remains a key tool for London's topographers. This paper examines the ways in which Horwood's map of London can be used to examine the pattern of residential housebuilding in a period in which it is often assumed (following Sir John Summerson) that housebuilding all but ceased during the Napoleonic Wars because of economic conditions in general and, in particular, the shortage of Baltic timber. It discusses the nature of the cartographic evidence and suggests lines of research on the relationship between population growth and movement, the supply of residential accommodation, and the social consequences of crowding. It compares the pattern of housebuilding derived from the cartographic evidence with that from the census. The emphasis is on the potential and pitfalls of the maps for an analysis of this kind.

KEITH D. LILLEY, **Urban Design in Medieval Coventry: the Planning of Much and Little Park Street within the Early of Chester's Fee**, *Midland History*, Vol. XXIII (1998), pp. 1-20. The origins of Coventry have long perplexed historians, not least because the town's early history is not generally well documented. In Coventry the history has been further slanted by the relatively well recorded thirteenth and fourteenth century disputes between the town authorities and the priory of St Mary. The patchy nature of documentary coverage, of course, explains the attractiveness of alternative approaches - notably that pioneered by M. R. G. Conzen and developed by T. R. Slater - whereby the plot patterns on modern maps are analysed for traces of different phases of planned or informal growth and change. This paper attempts to make use of a variety of historical sources in tandem with the plan analysis approach employed by

geographers to construct a picture of urban development in the small area of Much and Little Park Street, which formed part of the Earl of Chester's fee and for which some documents also exist. What emerges is evidence of a twelfth century town planning scheme by the Earls of Chester, for the suburban extension of Coventry, which is comparable to better known projects in Lichfield (1140) and Stratford-upon-Avon (1196) and forms part of a wider pattern of contemporary town plantations.

PETER MALPASS, **Continuity and Change in Philanthropic Housing Organisations: the Octavia Hill Housing Trust and the Guinness Trust**, *The London Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999), pp. 38-57. The role of non-statutory authorities in housing provision has come to the forefront again in recent decades. Some of the most prominent housing associations at work today, such as the Peabody Trust and the Guinness Trust, have a history going back to the nineteenth century, and they have survived because they have successfully adapted to changing circumstances. Other Victorian housing organisations, burdened with unmodernised housing stock and inflexible traditions of management, have disappeared. Peter Malpass shows how the philanthropic sector in London housing was marginalised after 1918, and how in a new guise, it has re-emerged since the 1974 Housing Act. Histories of housing which have assumed the inevitable triumph of local authority provision now seem to be badly misleading.

DAVID MARTIN & BARBARA MARTIN, **Adapting Houses to Changing Needs: Multi-Phased Medieval and Transitional Houses in Eastern Sussex**, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. 137 (1999), pp. 121-32. It is often claimed that the 150 years from 1380 witnessed an emerging *nouveau riche* class, able for the first time to construct houses incorporating a lofty open hall and substantial first-floor end-chambers which were sufficiently well built to survive to the present day. That this model is broadly correct, there is little doubt. But by implying that these houses were always constructed in one phase, wholly replacing their predecessors, we are in danger of over-simplifying the true picture. Research in East Sussex (based on surveys of 234 buildings dating from c.1350 to c.1570) indicates that at least 29 per cent, and perhaps as many as 40 per cent of our surviving medieval and transitional housing stock are the result of piecemeal enlargement and reconstruction. Does multi-phase reconstruction have anything to tell us about the availability of capital in the period in question? Have we been too ready to assume that replacement always involved improvement, or are the examples of rebuilding to a lesser specification or the same dimensions as likely to have been the norm?

GARTH MYERS, **Colonial Discourse and Africa's Colonised Middle: Ajit Singh's Architecture**, *Historical Geography*, Vol. 27 (1999), pp. 27-55. One of colonial rule's most complicated legacies is the scores of colonized people left stranded between the metropolitan power and the indigenous subjects in cultural, political and economic terms. This is especially the case in former British Africa, where indirect rule relied on colonized people to keep the machinery of colonialism functioning. One such figure is the focus of this contribution to a special edition of the journal dedicated to colonial geographies. Ajit Singh Hoogan was born in the Punjab in 1910, and graduated in maths and engineering in 1932 from Khalsa College, Amritsar, where he found a second informal home at the Indian Arts Institute, made numerous contacts in a circle of artists and intellectuals, and attempted without success to make a career in photography and film. Most of his working life was spent in the Zanzibar Protectorate (1937-63), but this was followed by fourteen years in Malawi, before returning to Zanzibar where he lived from 1979 until his death in 1986. In Zanzibar his design talent was quickly recognised and he was moved from Mechanical Engineering to the Architectural side of the Public Works Department, becoming de facto chief of architectural design in 1941 and Architectural Superintendent in 1951. With the backing of the British chief secretary (who shared many interests) Ajit Singh was responsible for a variety of projects which embodied both the indigenous building and design styles of Africa, "Indo-Saracenic" styles, and the monumental architecture of Herbert Baker. The results for Zanzibar (and later in Malawi) were

surprisingly subtle buildings with a capacity for blending well with the host culture's cityscapes. Much of the paper addresses post-colonial discourse, but the professional biography of a mid- to late-twentieth century colonial architect is an interesting supplement to a field which is not overcrowded with well researched material.

F. J. D. NEVOLA, "Per Ornato Della Città": Siena's Strada Romana and Fifteenth-Century Urban Renewal," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXXXII, No. 1 (March 2000), pp. 26-50. Public control of and financial contributions to urban renewal projects are not, as is so often assumed, a nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon. In Siena such concerns can be traced to the late thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth, when the city experienced its greatest moment of demographic and architectural expansion and when the republican government, known as the Nine (1287-1355), showed special consideration for the appearance of the city and oversaw the construction and maintenance of the city's main public and religious buildings. A corpus of new laws directed the regulation of both private and public architecture and protected public space - concentrating initially on the civic core of the piazza del Campo and the Palazzo Pubblico - but also embracing infrastructural improvements to water supply, drains, street paving and fortifications. The Black Death of 1348 brought this programme to a halt, but in the fifteenth century a different regime revived a programme of renewal in the principal public spaces and streets. The Strada Romana was the main north-south route through Siena, carrying pilgrims to Rome on the via Francigena, serving the luxury goods shops just off the Campo, and avoiding the oldest neighbourhoods. Along this route property-owners were obliged by ordinances to maintain and embellish their buildings, and public funds were made available to support these activities - in marked contrast to the more common Italian medieval urban practice of extracting contributions from the street or neighbourhood concerned. Derelict properties were confiscated and sold to developers - often at subsidised prices - to avoid the "great dishonour" that derelict buildings brought to the city. A new civic magistracy, the Ufficiali sopra l'Ornato, was instituted to coordinate these activities and to zone commercial activity at appropriate points along the Strada Romana.

SIMON PARKER, *From the Slums to the Suburbs: Labour Party Policy, the LCC and the Woodberry Down Estate, Stoke Newington 1934-1961*, *The London Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1999), pp. 51-69. Woodberry Down will be known to historians of building construction as the first postwar London County Council estate to incorporate eight-storey blocks of flats, served by lifts, and built in monolithic concrete (following earlier proposals for steel frames), setting the scene for extensive subsequent development of multi-storey housing. It was also an estate which helped to shape wider County Council policy on social housing, mixed development and the community facilities from which so much was expected. This article is mainly about the housing and social policy which evolved from the scheme's genesis in the 1930s to the 1960s. It provides an excellent survey of these developments, emphasising the need for construction historians now to look further into the technical aspects of the scheme and providing a useful framework within which to work.

R. W. RENNISON, *Richard Cail (1812-1893): Victorian Contractor and Man of Many Parts*, *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (1998-99), pp. 161-184. Richard Cail was born in Gateshead in 1812 and it was on Tyneside that his varied career and public service was focussed. His father was a tea-dealer and accountant, and later regional supervisor for the Inland Revenue, and he provided a good education for Richard at Dr Bruce's Academy in Newcastle before pushing his son to "learn a trade" by means of a full seven years of apprenticeship ending in 1832 with his admittance to the Guild of Bricklayers and Plasterers. The following year he was granted the Freedom of Newcastle, exempting him from all local dues on imported building materials. This was hardly the start of a rags to riches story, but privilege was no insurance against business failure in the notoriously precarious

contracting world of the nineteenth century. Cail's successes in early housing speculation, public works, church building and railway bridge construction and waterworks rapidly established him as one of the North East's leading contractors in the years between 1832 and 1844, when he married the daughter of a partner in an alkali manufacturing company and joined the firm as managing director. He returned to contracting in the 1860s when, as director of the company formed to build one of the Tyne bridges, he stepped in after the failure of the ironwork contractor to complete the project. Later as Newcastle city councillor, sheriff, mayor, and member of numerous committees he was able to use his skill as a builder and engineer on numerous public projects. Interestingly, it was not until 1876 - well after his retirement - that he became an Associate of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

TED RUDDOCK, *Galashiels wire suspension bridge, 1816*, *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1999-2000), pp. 103-114. Early nineteenth-century British and European writers already knew of the existence of what were known as "bridges of suspension" and that one - the iron Winch Bridge - had spanned the Tees since 1741, while James Finley had built the first such structure in the United States in 1801 using chains. Telford and Brown experimented with a similar structure for their Runcorn bridge in 1812-14, but did not implement it. The first bridge in Britain (and probably in Europe) to employ this technology was the iron-wire footbridge built in 1816 for Richard Lees, a textile manufacturer, linking his factory buildings on opposite sides of the Gala Water at Galashiels, and spanning 110 feet between the guyed wooden posts which provided support. Almost certainly it was inspired by the publicity associated with the use of a wire bridge across the Schuylkill River at Philadelphia following the collapse of one of James Finley's chain bridges under unusually heavy snow loading. At Galashiels two designs were implemented, the first based on a shallow catenary rising scarcely higher than the handrail. The second design added much higher supporting posts from the top of which a series of stays were used to stabilise the shallow catenary. A note on the drawing explains: "N.B. The bridge was first erected to this elevation [No.1], but it had too much vibration and No.2 was adopted." This article was published before the embarrassment associated with London's wobbly footbridge, but the story evidently bears some similarity.

DAVID STOCKER, "A Very Goodly House Longging to Sutton ..." A Reconstruction of 'John of Gaunt's Palace', *Lincoln, Lincolnshire History & Archaeology*, Vol. 34 (1999), pp. 5-15. With the publication of the final volume of the Survey of Lincoln Houses (S. Jones, K. Major, J. Varley and C. P. C. Johnson, *The Survey of Ancient Houses in Lincoln*, 4 Volumes (Lincoln, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1996) the medieval domestic architecture of Uphill Lincoln has become widely accessible. This paper is the first of many which will build on the analysis of Stanley Jones of Lincoln's medieval housing types, and it seeks to take the discussion a small step forward by attempting a reconstruction of the well-known Downhill Lincoln building known as John of Gaunt's Palace from the documentary and topographical sources currently available, and to assess it against the building forms identified in the larger survey project. The connection with John of Gaunt, although tenuous, may be real enough since John de Sutton - mayor and builder of parts of the palace - was a vassal of Gaunt and the building's probable origin in c.1380-1400 coincides with a period when Lincoln was temporarily home to Gaunt's faction of Richard II's court.

ERIC TILL, *Fact and Conjecture: The Building of Burghley House 1555-1587*, *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, No. 52 (1999), pp.15-20. The building of Burghley House by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, took place over an extended period from the 1550s to the 1580s and there has been a good deal of debate about when the various parts of the house were completed. One of the most tantalising features is the barrel vaulted Roman staircase, a surprisingly pure Renaissance design. Eric Till uses a memorandum by Cecil written in 1556 to suggest that at least the lower part of that staircase was completed at that time.



RALPH TURVEY, **Office Rents in the City of London, 1867-1910**, *The London Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1998), pp. 53-67. Although housing is relatively well recorded by a number of different indicators (notably the Census), office buildings are much more difficult to quantify. An interesting "guesstimate" offered by the author of this article is that of all the buildings that existed in 1855, about four-fifths had been rebuilt by 1905, and that while the average street block in 1840 carried an amount of floorspace equal to twice its gross area, the blocks largely occupied by late Victorian buildings carried twice as much. Thus it is likely that during Victorian times, City floorspace increased by at least one-half. This represents an enormous building load, albeit one that fluctuated markedly with the wider economic and building cycles. What makes this article important for historians of construction is the methodology employed by the author in piecing together evidence from a variety of indicators in the demand for office space and the amount and timing of building construction in the City. Surveyors' fees, letter delivery statistics (vitiated by the spread of telephones), data on the introduction of new lavatories in older buildings, the effects of new height regulations and the spread of hydraulic and electric lifts, are all set against fluctuations in rents for offices in a fascinating application of the economic historian's skills to the understanding of construction activity.

CHRISTINE G. VARGA-HARRIS, **Green is the Colour of Hope? The Crumbling Façade of Postwar Byt Through the Public Eyes of *Vecherniaia Moskva***, *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3 (December 1998), pp. 193-220. "Byt" means daily life in Russian, and the *Vecherniaia Moskva* is the popular newspaper "Evening Moscow" which received official sanction - albeit indirectly and within carefully circumscribed limits - to carry stories and readers' letters which convey numerous insights into a variety of the everyday concerns of Muscovites. Private concerns were of course imbued with a sense of shared citizenship that emerged during the course of World War II and would still be close to the postwar Soviet ideal. But the popular style of "Evening Moscow" encouraged reader participation, and a careful reading of the letters and the editorial responses reveals a kind of public forum for the discussion of local issues affecting the lives of readers, including the voicing of grievances and their resolution. Prominent amongst the issues identified in this article were housing and the quality of accommodation, building construction and repair, as well as numerous clues to what was valued in the Russian dwelling and its decoration. The "crumbling façade" of the title indicates the critical slant of much of this dialogue.

R. G. WILSON and A. L. MACKLEY, **How much did the English country house cost to build, 1660-1880?** *Economic History Review*, Vol. LII, No. 3 (1999), pp. 436-468. Architectural historians writing about country houses have seldom estimated their number, cost, and distribution throughout England. To economic historians, expenditure upon such houses has remained something of an enigma in debates about capital formation. This article concentrates upon cost. It examines reports of expenditure, building accounts, and architects' and builders' estimates to develop an empirical relationship between house size and cost as a basis for the estimation of investment in English country house building. For example, it suggests that some £3.8 million was spent in constructing houses on the larger estates in 1770-1800, an appreciable sum in relation to other forms of investment in the period and, at a local level, an important driving force in an economy which supported hundred of workmen, craftsmen, furniture makers, gardeners and others providing the material infrastructure for large high-quality building. If the authors' concern is macro-economic, they have nevertheless provided a mountain of highly readable material for historians of construction on the costs of individual buildings and its breakdown.