

editors of this volume advocate an “inclusive agenda,” which will require identifying and protecting buildings, structures, and landscapes associated with the dazzling variety of women’s experiences on this continent. This excellent volume offers no easy solutions, but suggests lines of thought for future scholars, professionals, and preservation advocates.

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Sloan Rules

Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors

By David Farber

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. Illustrations, notes, index. \$27.50.)

Making and Selling Cars

Innovation and Change in the U.S. Automotive Industry

By James M. Rubenstein

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Pp. ix, 401. Illustrations, figures, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

In *Sloan Rules* David Farber has written an informative, balanced, and highly readable account of the life and impact of one of the most important figures in American business. Other historians and commentators, notably Alfred D. Chandler and Peter F. Drucker, have outlined Sloan’s role in creating the vertically integrated corporation, but they focused on Sloan as efficient, rational, and objective—in short, the consummate businessman. Although Farber covers some aspects of this story, his contribution here is to sketch out Sloan’s life and business career before General Motors, and then to examine the ways that Sloan put his influence and con-

siderable financial resources behind an agenda Farber calls “corporate conservatism.” This included strenuously opposing not only government safety standards for automobiles, but also most aspects of the New Deal (as did many other business leaders of the day, to be sure). Throughout his long career as the head of General Motors, Sloan put corporate well-being before all other concerns. At the same time, however, Farber points out that Sloan also created the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Farber has produced an account that contributes to our understanding of the larger issue of the influence of private money,

trade associations, and corporate public relations upon governmental policies and effectiveness.

Farber describes numerous examples of Sloan's single-minded pursuit of corporate profit and violent opposition to government "interference" in any form from the beginning of the Depression onward. Among these were his creation of the Automobile Safety Foundation—which for decades successfully forestalled legislation that would have increased automobile makers' responsibilities—and his generous support (along with members of the DuPont family) of the xenophobic, anti-Semitic American Liberty League to oppose the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and other New Deal candidates. Sloan also deployed his own wealth and the formidable public relations machinery of GM to oppose most New Deal programs. Later, in the 1940s, Sloan only reluctantly switched to war production. All this Sloan did in the name of protecting GM profits and business autonomy.

As Farber cautions, Sloan's private life and thoughts will probably remain unknown, given a lack of documentation and Sloan's flat refusal to talk about himself. Under these constraints, it would have been better if Farber had left out speculative passages about personalities and how Sloan and others felt or acted in private circumstances. This, though, is a minor complaint about a book which adds a new layer to our understanding of the term "Sloanism."

In *Making and Selling Cars*, James M. Rubenstein has taken on the extremely ambitious task of describing the production and marketing of automobiles in the U.S., Japan, and Europe. For readers with a particular interest in the automobile industry or business history generally, Rubenstein offers a broad overview covering the earliest days of the American industry down to the present. He discusses parts production and supply, modes of production, labor, marketing, and the rise of today's global market. The first half of the book addresses manufacturing; the second, sales. Within each half, Rubenstein arranges topics in paired thematic chapters. In odd-numbered chapters, he offers a synthesis of the early history of the industry, which witnessed the introduction of mass-production and standardization. Even-numbered chapters treat more recent developments, encompassing roughly the last quarter century. Examples include the replacement of the Fordist paradigm with a model based on Japanese "flexible production," and changing expectations and hopes for the labor force, ending with a summary of recent activity in other Asian countries, notably China. Rubenstein illuminates aspects mostly neglected in standard histories of the industry, particularly in his treatment of Japanese automobile production, which includes an account of how U.S. companies responded, and of the cross-fertilization that eventually led to the present international market.

In adding coverage of the last twenty-five years to the classic narratives of the automobile industry by James J. Flink and John B. Rae, Rubenstein has helped address a long-felt need. The chapters dealing with recent history will particularly interest readers who want to know about the global automobile business since the various crises and challenges that the American industry faced beginning in the 1970s. Specialist readers may wish Rubenstein had utilized more of the recent literature on the larger implications of consumerism, installment buying, marketing, and advertising. More could also have been said about

the long-term side effects of the automobile industry, such as safety, environmental damage, and the complicated story of government subsidies which have helped from its earliest days to make the industry possible. Despite these issues, for readers seeking an overview of the industry Rubenstein's book offers a useful profile, especially for the last quarter century.

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*America's New Downtowns
Revitalization or Reinvention?*

By Larry R. Ford

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. Pp. vii, 340. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

This is a book with a purpose that succeeds admirably in not becoming partisan. It is a serviceable book that does what it sets out to do, which is to create a vocabulary of comparative terms for assessing American downtowns. Is it fun to read? Not particularly. Is it useful? That depends on what you want as a reader. This is a book of information, not big ideas. And if it is information about downtowns you are after, then this may be the book for you.

Ford's work enters a field already well established, which might be referred to loosely as contemporary city

studies. It is a field that starts, maybe, with Jane Jacobs and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), and proceeds through the work of, among others, William H. Whyte in *City: Rediscovering the Center* (1988), Richard Sennett's philosophizing in *The Conscience of the Eye: the Design and Social Life of Cities* (1990, 1992), and on to the postmodernist Mike Davis's *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (1990, 1992), and more recent works such as Thomas Bender's *The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea* (2002), and Robert M. Fogelson's *Downtown:*