

age of 51—left his bank presidency and joined Pershing’s army as a colonel. He retired from his brief military service as a brigadier general and was appointed the first director of the Bureau of the Budget in 1921 by President Warren Harding. Chosen to join Calvin Coolidge as vice-president from 1924–1928, he then was selected as ambassador to Great Britain by President Herbert Hoover. He ended his national-level Republican service by heading up the Reconstruction Finance Corporation in 1932. Thus, for over a decade, Charles Dawes was often in the public eye serving his government in one capacity or another.

Dawes’s archive at Northwestern University is quite large, and Dunlap has plumbed its depths. The literature surrounding Dawes’s life is extensive and the author’s citations reflect the broad resource net she cast in constructing her narrative. Charles Dawes was a colorful character who did not suffer fools gladly. He

often spoke bluntly and would have readily spurned “politically correct” speech. But he also had a soft heart for the poor and down-trodden and spent freely on acquiring hotels for the homeless to live in. Dawes was a self-made man who valued hard work and thriftiness tempered with Christian generosity. He spent his life promoting solid Republican values of small government with restrained budgets. Franklin Roosevelt’s philosophy of big government spending was anathema to him.

This is a well-researched and smoothly written account of an important American businessman and politician who spent much of his adult life actively engaged in the issues confronting the nation and its government. Dunlap’s new book should stand as Dawes’s major biography for years to come.

EDWARD A. GOEDEKEN, Iowa State University

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## *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America*

By Gretchen Buggeln

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Pp. xxx, 346. Illustrations, appendices, notes, sources, index. Cloth, \$140.00; paper, \$40.00.)

Every suburb in Indiana has them, often by the half-dozen: the inexpensive, intimate, brick, stone, and

concrete churches erected during the building, and church-going, boom that followed World War II.

They are not vernacular in the strict sense, since most of them were architect-designed and professionally built, but they are so common as to be almost invisible. Gretchen Buggeln's warm, generous study brings these churches into focus, not only through her analysis of their design but through a careful examination of the hopes and dreams of the young congregations that sacrificed not only cash, but often sweat and tears, to build them.

Buggeln, the Duesenberg Chair in Christianity and the Arts at Valparaiso University, combines an intelligent, sympathetic eye with extensive archival research and interviews conducted around the Midwest, including with the formidable mid-century architect Ed Sovik. Her book weaves analysis of architectural form into a social and theological history of the postwar suburbs. On the one hand, young congregations hustling to break ground were financially stretched; on the other, they were better-educated and more attuned to national and international conversations about theology and modern architecture than a random sampling of the American population. Many turned to a trio of "form-givers" (Sovik, Edward Dart, and Charles Stade) whose churches show the mark both of the international modern movement and of their sympathetic engagement with denominational and congregational needs.

And many, though by no means all, turned to variations on the A-frame design, an option that "seemed to balance all the competing interests" at play: the "weight of tradition in religious building," the "keen imagination and professional ideals of church architects," the theological desires of postwar church leaders, and, last but not least, the need for low costs and "efficiency" (p. 85).

Buggeln skillfully leads readers through the production of these churches, evoking the "earnest" pastors, congregational building committees, and architects whose interaction shaped them. In this period, both Catholics and Protestants compared the church congregation to a family gathered for worship, and sought intimate sanctuary spaces with layouts that, in one way or another, brought the congregation close to the altar and/or pulpit, but also to each other. As Buggeln points out in one of the book's best chapters, the familial idea extended to the supposedly ancillary spaces for fellowship and education. Kitchens, typically designed and heavily used by women, and Sunday school classrooms formed integrated units with the sanctuary, not only reflecting the ideal of the congregational family but producing it through constant activity.

Like all families, postwar suburban congregations were imperfect. Even as they were built, these communities were often criticized for

their stifling conformity, and more seriously, for their exclusion of racial minorities. Buggeln acknowledges the validity of these criticisms. But at the same time, her study recaptures the excitement and dedication these churches' builders brought to

the task of designing the new postwar world, and calls us to reconsider their legacy—not simply drive by.

CATHERINE R. OSBORNE, Loyola Marymount University

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### *Curating America: Journeys through Storyscapes of the American Past*

By Richard Rabinowitz

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. 382. Illustrations, sources, index. \$39.95.)

Richard Rabinowitz loves museums. “I am still amazed at the magic of the museum moment at its best,” he writes, “when it crystallizes the immediacy of the theater, the meticulous scholarship of the library, the open-ended adventure of the laboratory, and the conviviality of the family table” (p. 59). Those of us who also love museums owe a great debt to Rabinowitz. As co-founder of the consulting firm American History Workshop, he has contributed to the development of some of the most impressive museums and exhibits of the last half-century, including the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and the New York Historical Society’s 2005 exhibit *Slavery in New York*.

In *Curating America*, Rabinowitz reflects on a fifty-year career spent at the intersection of historical scholarship and the museum world. Through a series of personal anecdotes and behind-the-scenes descriptions of myriad projects he has worked on, Rabinowitz considers the ways our telling of the American past has evolved since the 1960s. The result is an entertaining, if sometimes overly ponderous, “cultural history in the form of a professional memoir” (p. 12).

Rabinowitz is a good storyteller, as anyone in his trade must be, and he begins the book with a “road-to-Damascus” tale of one Sunday in 1967 when, on a visit to Old Sturbridge Village (a living-history museum in central Massachusetts), he suddenly realized the power of