

*Chicago, 1910-29: Building, Planning, and Urban Technology.*  
By Carl W. Condit. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973. Pp. xiv, 354. Illustrations, notes, tables, bibliography, index. \$12.50.)

In *Chicago, 1910-29*, Carl W. Condit of Northwestern University has essayed a physical history of the "Burnham years"—not the years when Daniel H. Burnham was alive (he died in 1912), but the years after his Chicago Plan of 1909 offered a comprehensive vision of how a great city should work and what it should look like.

Two decades might seem a restricted subject, but Condit refers backwards and forwards in time so easily and with so much knowledge that he very nearly presents a physical description of Chicago through its entire history. In two ways, his performance is dazzling. First, his detailed treatment of the architectural and engineering feats of 1910-1929 offers a thorough appraisal of structures that other historians have almost wholly neglected in the belief that the buildings did not manifest any great originality. Second, he has penetrated into areas not normally considered: the entire transportation network, the treatment of sewage and water, and building types other than the skyscraper or the single family residence. Only a scholar with a deep love for his city could have written such a book, and only because of such a love could he have so roundly taken the measure of the city and concluded that in terms of human life, the final terms of history, Chicago has failed miserably.

Condit may often seem a victim of the normal form of Chicagoan bragging: the grain exchange is "by far the largest market of its kind in the world" (p. 130); Halsted is "very likely . . . the longest commercial street in the world" (p. 74), while Lake Shore Drive is the "most celebrated of all urban parkways" (p. 32); the city has "the largest and most effective sewage treatment system in the world" (p. 17) and the "largest water supply system" (p. 16); Wacker Drive is "the first two-level boulevard in the world" (p. 250); etc. All this sort of superficial glory in size and technology is, however, brought before the bar: Condit does not hesitate to call Chicago a city depleted by "the intransigence of the modern suburb" (p. 74), with an inner city gaining "an ever widening trail of slums, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and ill health, crime, and endemic law-

lessness" (p. 66), where "any elected body . . . is likely to be subject to corruption" (p. 18) in "a nation that places aggrandizement before life itself" (p. 9).

Thus Condit's picture of the years of the Chicago Plan is largely tragic. Despite the vision, the philanthropy, and the daring technological means, it became "no longer possible to hide the fact that there were two cities, one consisting of the skyscraper core and the luxury apartments that stretched along the lakefront, and the other its exact opposite—the tangled rail wreckage, the deteriorating factories and warehouses, the slums and the spreading ghetto, the miles of gray areas . . ." (p. 167). It is a moving study, full of facts balanced by clear-sighted judgments.

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*Centennial History of the University of Nebraska. Volume II, The Modern University, 1920-1969.* By R. McLaran Sawyer. (Lincoln: Centennial Press, 1973. Pp. x, 292. Notes, illustrations, appendices, note on sources, index. \$7.50.)

With each major anniversary of an educational institution an official history usually appears. These institutional biographies vary considerably in quality and value as historical literature. Some are exceptional contributions as social and intellectual history; others take a more institutional approach, presenting the history of a single college or university as a reflection of the trends in American life. The majority of the anniversary volumes, however, fall into another category. They are usually little more than a compilation of summaries and are lacking in interpretation and analysis.

R. McLaran Sawyer's *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska* is an example of this last type of educational history. His volume, which traces the university from its status as a traditional midwestern land grant institution in 1920 to that of a large complex modern university in 1969, is an encyclopedia of factual information about administrators, academic organization, enrollments, appropriations, faculties, student life, and athletics. The author says that this is an interpretative history, but he offers little analysis of the influences that shaped the university or of the institution's role in serving the people and the state. He explains