

## Revisiting Jacques Gréber's *L'Architecture aux États-Unis : From City Beautiful to Cité-Jardin*

Isabelle Gournay

Volume 29, Number 2, March 2001

Special Issue — Jacques Gréber (1882-1962)

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019202ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019202ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

### ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this article

Gournay, I. (2001). Revisiting Jacques Gréber's *L'Architecture aux États-Unis : From City Beautiful to Cité-Jardin*. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 29(2), 6–19. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019202ar>

### Article abstract

In 1920, Jacques Gréber published what was and still is the largest book on U.S. architecture and urban design ever issued in France. His dual agenda was to stress the impact of Beaux-Arts design methods (presenting his gardens and Philadelphia parkway as highlights of this trend), and to advocate the practical accomplishments of a pragmatic and affluent civilization.

Showcasing an "edited" North American city, devoid of commercialism and filled with civic structures of great dignity and comfort, *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* looked back to ideals and accomplishments of the American Renaissance and ahead to the metropolitan culture of the 1920s. For the first time in France, ventures by U.S. architects in the field of civic art were acknowledged as major achievements. Gréber formulated ideas about modern North American civic centres, business districts, parks, and model suburbs that would affect his proposals for Ottawa and on his French career. His book triggered the evolution of French views of the U.S.-built environment toward greater interest and generally more positive views.

# ***Revisiting Jacques Gréber's L'Architecture aux États-Unis: From City Beautiful to Cité-Jardin***

**Isabelle Gournay**

## **Abstract**

***In 1920, Jacques Gréber published what was and still is the largest book on U.S. architecture and urban design ever issued in France. His dual agenda was to stress the impact of Beaux-Arts design methods (presenting his gardens and Philadelphia parkway as highlights of this trend), and to advocate the practical accomplishments of a pragmatic and affluent civilization.***

***Showcasing an "edited" North American city, devoid of commercialism and filled with civic structures of great dignity and comfort, L'Architecture aux États-Unis looked back to ideals and accomplishments of the American Renaissance and ahead to the metropolitan culture of the 1920s. For the first time in France, ventures by U.S. architects in the field of civic art were acknowledged as major achievements. Gréber formulated ideas about modern North American civic centres, business districts, parks, and model suburbs that would affect his proposals for Ottawa and on his French career. His book triggered the evolution of French views of the U.S.-built environment toward greater interest and generally more positive views.***

## **Résumé**

***En 1920, Jacques Gréber publie l'ouvrage le plus important sur l'architecture et l'art urbain aux États-Unis jamais paru en France. Il y insiste sur l'influence des méthodes de conception "Beaux-Arts" (en présentant ses jardins et son parkway à Philadelphie comme des points forts de ce courant) ainsi que sur les résultats accomplis par une société prospère et pragmatique. Présentant une ville nord-américaine "corrigée", dénuée de mercantilisme et parée d'édifices civiques d'une dignité et d'un confort supérieurs, L'Architecture aux États-Unis se penche sur les idéaux et réalisations de l'American Renaissance et anticipe la culture métropolitaine des années Vingt. C'est la première fois que le travail des architectes américains en matière d'art urbain est reconnu en France. Gréber formule des idées sur la ville moderne d'Amérique du Nord—ses centres civiques, quartiers de bureaux, parcs, et banlieues modèles—qui auront un impact sur ses projets pour Ottawa et son oeuvre en France. Grâce à son livre, les opinions des Français sur le cadre bâti aux États-Unis devinrent plus nombreuses et favorables.***

Jacques Gréber gained special status among twentieth-century French planners and architects through close ties with the Northeastern United States, which he established as early as 1910. This privileged connection was brought to public attention in 1920 with the publication of *L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, which this article places in a broad historical and cultural context.<sup>1</sup> Gréber's book was not devoid of bias and shortcomings proper to an era marked by heightened French chauvinism, German bashing, and a mix of gratitude and disappointment toward Americans. However, anyone familiar with the history of U.S. planning and architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will appreciate the overall relevance of Gréber's information and the perceptiveness of his analysis.

*L'Architecture aux États-Unis* looked back to ideals and accomplishments of the so-called American Renaissance (1876–1914) and ahead to the metropolitan culture of the 1920s, and placed Gréber's early garden and planning work in its proper North American context. It remains to this day a remarkable achievement, and would deserve being reprinted and translated in its entirety. Gréber's book definitely filled a major gap. Its comprehensiveness and accuracy set new standards in France, a country that had not kept track of the intense planning and construction activity in North America between 1895 and 1915.<sup>2</sup> In fact, during this period, American urbanism and architecture had mostly been sociological curiosities and objects of self-congratulation or condescension for their indebtedness to Beaux-Arts principles; with the war, information had virtually stopped circulating.<sup>3</sup>

It is indeed a challenge to analyze the content of *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* in a few pages. Issued by Payot, a publisher without a design track record but with a strong scholarly reputation, it consisted of two in-quarto volumes and included 400 illustrations of nearly 130 buildings and plans for six cities, which were for the most part unknown in France. After a brief historical survey, the book divided according to building types. Focusing on the eastern seaboard and Midwest, Gréber guided readers from exclusive resorts and suburbs to business districts and civic centres. Determined to emphasize programs "typical" of the New World, he devoted the majority of the first volume to single-family houses and metropolitan hotels. The second volume afforded an overview of a variety of commercial and civic programs—either large structures in metropolitan centres or more modest ones in smaller cities—including office buildings, factories, schools and universities, museums and libraries, churches, military buildings, hospitals, and state capitols. In a subsequent chapter entitled "Grandes Compositions d'Ensemble," Gréber showed urban plans and views of the Chicago and San Diego World's Fairs. Finally he illustrated a few commemorative monuments.

Of all architects residing in France, Gréber was certainly the best acquainted with the United States. As evidenced by sources listed in his bibliography, he had done his "homework,"

providing a personal summary of what New York-based architectural reviews had published since 1900.<sup>4</sup> Large photographs were beautifully reprinted, resulting in the high retail price of 150 francs. Floor plans were numerous and highly legible. The rather short, loosely knit text that, according to the author himself, was dictated to a secretary, was delivered in clear and lively prose, accessible to a lay audience.<sup>5</sup>

As indicated in his attention-grabbing and rather pompous subtitle, *Preuve de la Force d'Expansion du Génie Français. Heureuse Association de Qualités admirablement complémentaires (Evidence of the Expansion Capability of the French genius. Fortunate Association of Admirably Complementary Qualities)*, Gréber's agenda was, on the one hand, to continue stressing the beneficial impact of French academic principles and to celebrate the contribution of designers belonging to the "Franco-American Beaux-Arts lobby," such as himself, and, on the other hand, to advocate the accomplishments of a pragmatic and affluent civilization. He meant to boost his countrymen's pride and confidence and encourage them to adopt new ideas. Having assimilated Beaux-Arts tenets on the logical implementation of a program and appropriate expression of character, Americans had achieved mastery of large-scale planning and construction. Their best European-inspired work displayed a high degree of craftsmanship, and achieved a tasteful, if sometimes exceedingly austere, simplicity. Properly American, and complementary to French artistry, were the professionalism, practicality, and productivity of designers who had become experts in certain programs and prided themselves in meeting their clients' exacting demands. As stated in the conclusion, Americans could help remedy a "temporary weakness," in the same way that French vineyards had been revived by California grapes after the phylloxera epidemic.<sup>6</sup>

Had the French genius truly conquered the U.S.? By 1920, more than 400 Americans had been officially enrolled in the architecture section of the Paris École des Beaux-Arts, many—like Charles McKim, Whitney Warren, Thomas Hastings, Ernest Flagg, to name a few—becoming prolific design and planning professionals.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, a few French architects, in particular Paul Cret in Philadelphia, assumed major positions in American schools and offices. As a garden and urban designer, Gréber belonged to this "club." The significant impact of the Beaux-Arts lobby on American public opinion was acknowledged by its very enemies, the likes of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, whose work Gréber deliberately ignored. Although Gréber never said so, the truth was that some of the architects mentioned in the book had received their French training at home and a few were actually quite critical of the Beaux-Arts system.<sup>8</sup>

Endowed with a marked superiority complex that Gréber's book translated so well, members of the design establishment were involved with "high" architecture and planning. Therefore *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* deliberately showcased the "edited" North American city, devoid of blatant commercialism,

that they were envisioning to achieve. Gréber shunned the vernacular, mass consumption, and entertainment (no gaudy movie palace here!). Because he lacked the space or did not consider them different or superior enough from French examples to be worthy of inclusion, Gréber did not include theatres or department stores, although this last program was one of the specialties of Daniel Burnham, whom he held in high esteem. Life in Manhattan was deemed "intense"; however, as in most contemporary architectural publications, street views had few cars or none. In addition to skyscrapers, New York City was pictured as juxtaposing "excerpts" of European cities, with French-looking *hôtels particuliers* or neo-Gothic churches, an impression we can still experience in the Upper East Side.

Gréber subscribed to the value system of the American design establishment and their powerful clients. For him, corporate competition was a stimulant for good office design. Social harmony was achieved through philanthropy and benevolent paternalism, as exemplified by the New York Public Library and the industrial compound established by the French silk maker Duplan (figure 1). Gréber depicted a country in which "ethnic conditions had blended wonderfully" and "the worker [found] in his workshop the same comfortable amenities as [did] the chairman of the corporation in his office." His was a "gendered" space of affluence where women reigned over home life in the suburbs while their businessmen husbands met in downtown clubs.

With *L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, Gréber hoped to gain new planning and garden commissions, and to boost his visibility in France where he had yet to make his mark. As he became involved with the Musée Social and started teaching at the Institut des Hautes Études Urbaines (subsequently renamed Institut d'Urbanisme), he meant to sharpen his cosmopolitan edge. Thanks to a remarkable sense of public relations, if not a certain opportunism, Gréber made sure his book would be known and appreciated not only by his colleagues, but also by scholars and the cultivated public.<sup>9</sup> For instance, he helped bring to the Salon des Artistes Français a large exhibition of photographs organized by the American Institute of Architects.<sup>10</sup> As France emerged from the Great War with new concerns for economic modernization and Taylorized productivity, Gréber, who had just returned from an official mission to study construction materials and machinery on the East Coast and Chicago, also hoped to influence industrialists and politicians.<sup>11</sup> Implementing, as the U.S. had done, better hygiene, greater comfort and rational planning was the order of the day for the Reconstruction of the Devastated Regions and the extension of cities. In effect, *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* became a reference work quoted in writings by non-specialists for its "technical competence."<sup>12</sup> Its illustrations were reprinted in a number of specialized or popular publications.<sup>13</sup>

What were the major themes that Gréber strengthened or introduced in France? In his chapter "Country Houses," he provided an original contribution to Europe's enduring fascination with the playgrounds of American millionaires, mostly built



Figure 1: Workers at the Duplan Silk Corporation (*L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, 2:41)

before the passing of income taxation in 1913, as well as slightly more modest homes in the far suburbs, making them at once more real and exotic. Estates planned on a grand scale encompassed not only full-scale sports facilities, but "pleasure farms." Although acknowledged as "*de grand luxe*," the latter were deemed useful inspirations, in picturesque design and hygiene, for France's reconstruction efforts.

Gréber took advantage of the opportunity to publicize his own garden designs, like his first *parterre de broderie* that he designed for a Long Island château in 1910, the year following his diplôme, and the gardens at Miramar, which are still extant in Newport, Rhode Island.<sup>14</sup> Designs for Edward T. Stotesbury in Chestnut Hill, and Joseph E. Widener in Elkins Park near Philadelphia (figure 2) epitomized his use of sweeping perspectives and consummate skill at recreating the atmosphere of seventeenth-century gardens.<sup>15</sup> While hailed in France,<sup>16</sup> these sophisticated creations inspired by the work of André Le Nôtre, where elaborate *parterres* took precedence over less formal lawn expenses, were regarded by most Americans as lavish indulgences of the newly rich, an interlude alien to their landscaping traditions.<sup>17</sup>

In the following chapter, "Garden Cities and Workers Towns," Gréber insisted that the "great charm of American life" related to the availability of single-family homes, which he regarded, like most French and American bourgeois reformers, as instruments of social equality and harmony. Commuting was not a hardship, and a "genuine harmony" had been established between American homes of every size and gardens that were the "necessary outcome of the strenuous life in big cities." Do not expect Gréber to illustrate Sears bungalows! His examples showcased outstanding and highly publicized experiments by elite designers.<sup>18</sup> The chapter centres on five model communities, for which master plans were reproduced. Forest Hills Gardens (figure 3), begun by the Russell Sage Foundation in 1911, exemplified the modern middle-class community, although its houses looked beyond the reach of most Frenchmen. While Gréber praised at length its French-trained chief architect, Grosvenor Atterbury, for his use of prefabricated concrete and his ability to create a united but varied streetscape, he paid only lip service to Olmsted Brothers, the landscape designers. Instead of the Station Square—which had been abundantly illustrated in the U.S. but looked quite Germanic—he showed the church, a more traditional and European element of town planning.<sup>19</sup>

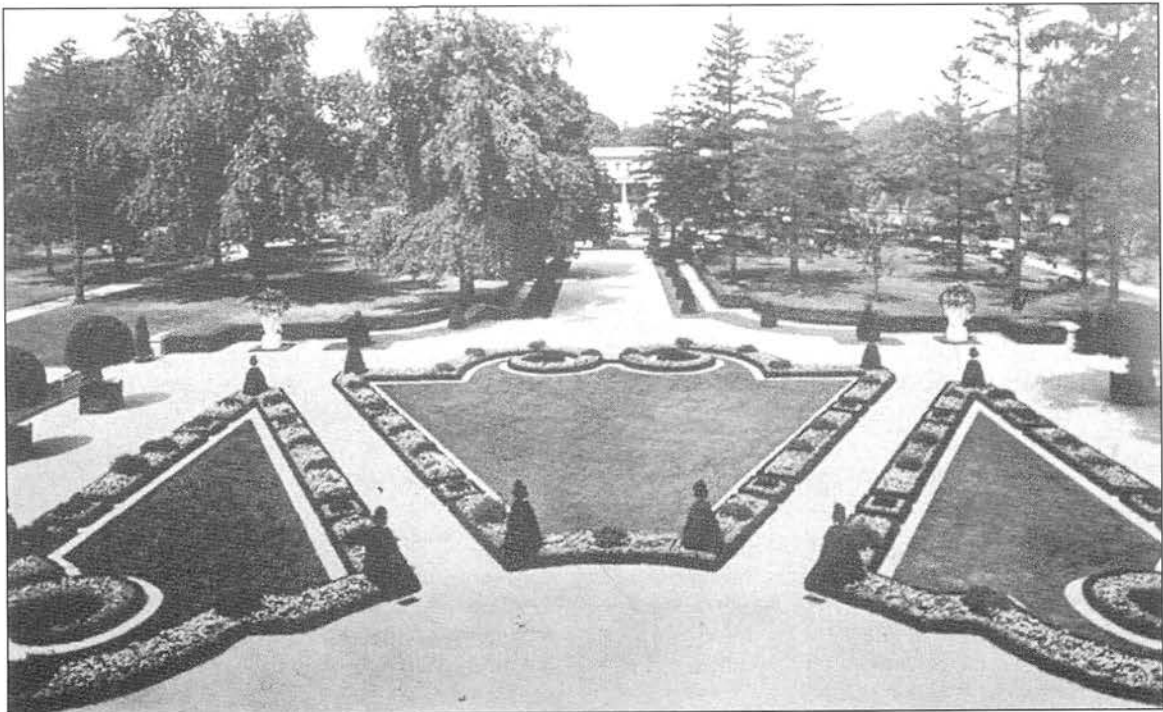
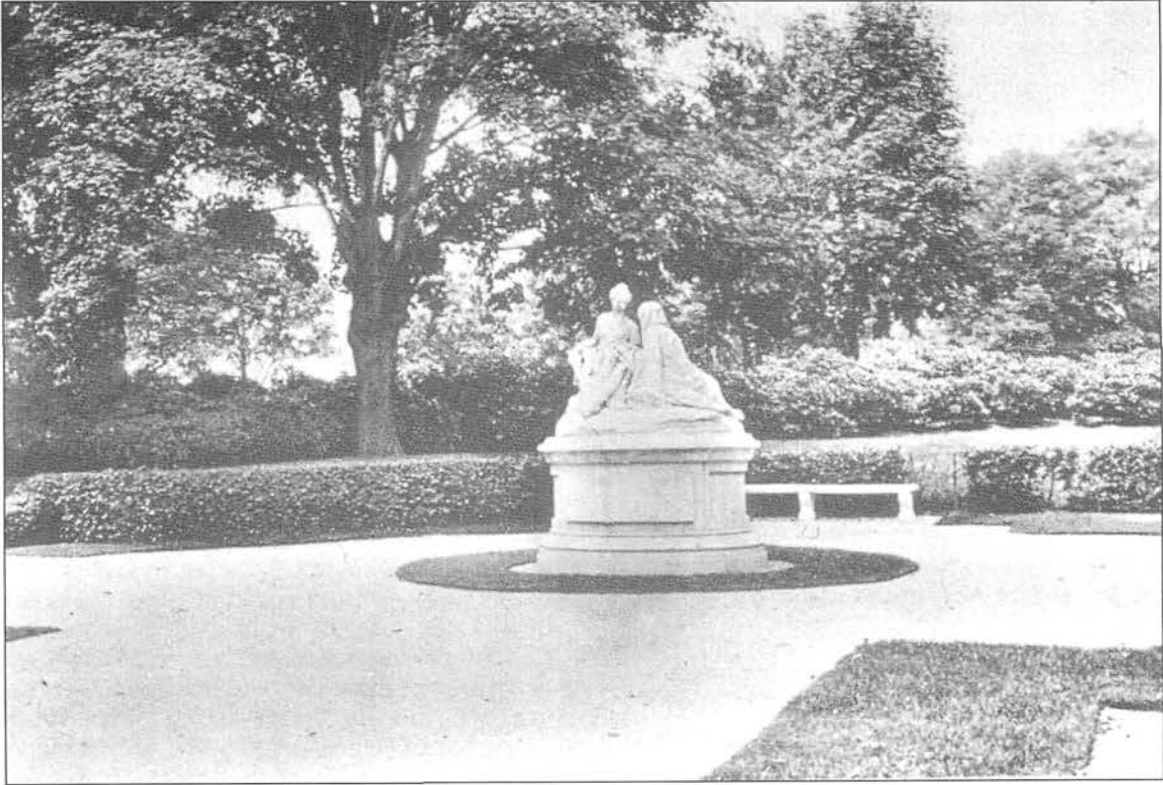
Gréber, who had already exhibited projects for low-cost housing at the Salon des Artistes Français,<sup>20</sup> insisted on the "considerable efforts" made to improve working-class residential districts. He showcased subdivisions begun in late 1917 by the federal government to house workers for the war industries, stressing that they had been effective tools in achieving victory over Germany. But he did not mention that Congress had refused to complete the schemes after the Armistice and had sold them. Gréber selected examples along the Atlantic Coast, from Atlantic Heights in New Hampshire to Hilton Village in Virginia,

showing rendering for streetscapes, school groups, and shops (figure 4).<sup>21</sup> He stressed how savings realized through standardization of plans and parts and skilful unit groupings had not compromised picturesqueness and variety. The sole photographs were those of twin houses under completion in Wilmington's Union Parks Gardens, their spacious and well-equipped kitchen showing a much higher standard than French public housing authorities aimed at. With a few photographs and comments on country clubs and commuter stations, Gréber also gave a very alluring image of affluent suburban living, while remaining quite vague on who could afford such standards. In particular, the very chic European-style Market Square in Lake Forest near Chicago (figure 5) was deemed representative of mainstream suburban "small civic centres."

At a time when a scientific branch of the Sorbonne was envisioned in the Paris suburbs, Gréber sustained his countrymen's interest in American campus planning and architecture, a topic he admitted could take an entire book. Some American universities had become *de véritables villes*. He demonstrated rather blatant Gallocentrism by omitting to mention radical differences between the "masterly" winning design for the University of California at Berkeley by his countryman Emile Bénard and the much more practical plan implemented by John Galen Howard. In addition to liberal arts institutions designed in the Collegiate Gothic spirit, Gréber illustrated the new building for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Harvard Medical School (figure 6), since both epitomized a desirable combination of formal planning and austere classicism at the service of a culture of expertise.<sup>22</sup>

Gréber considerably strengthened the idea of an American leadership in planning and design for mass transportation and tourism. He offered proof that large metropolitan hotels, as cities in miniature, were far better equipped than establishments of the same standing in France and suggested that a hybrid type of the apartment hotel should be introduced to Paris. For him, U.S. passenger terminals, the design of which went hand in hand with radical operations for relocating and centralizing railroad yards, were civic more than commercial in character. Their cleanliness, utter absence of advertising, and serene atmosphere, even at rush hour, was in marked contrast with stations in large French cities. He illustrated plans for the Union Stations in Washington and Chicago, and stressed the interior layout of New York's Grand Central Terminal, where ramps eased fast luggage delivery and passenger flow and the women's waiting room looked palatial.

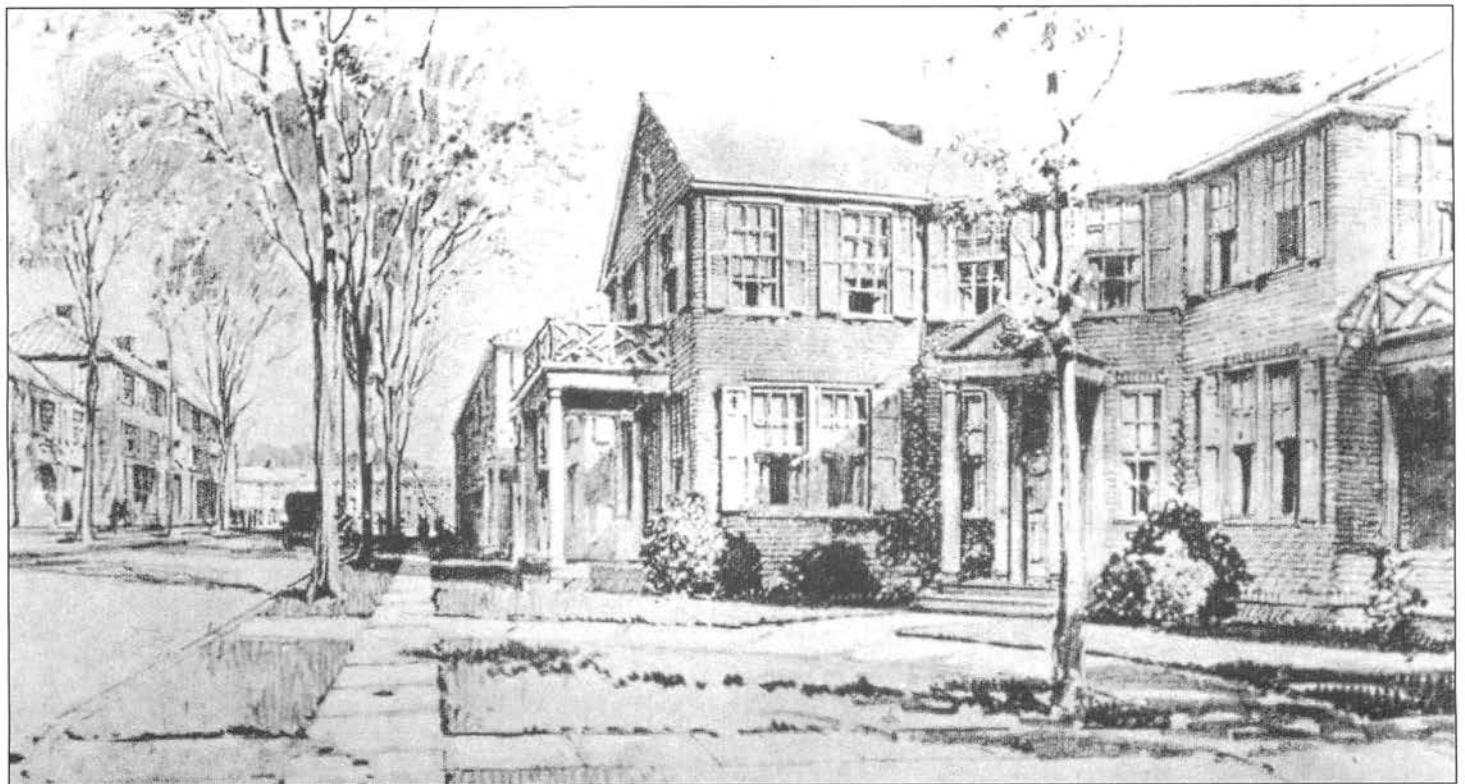
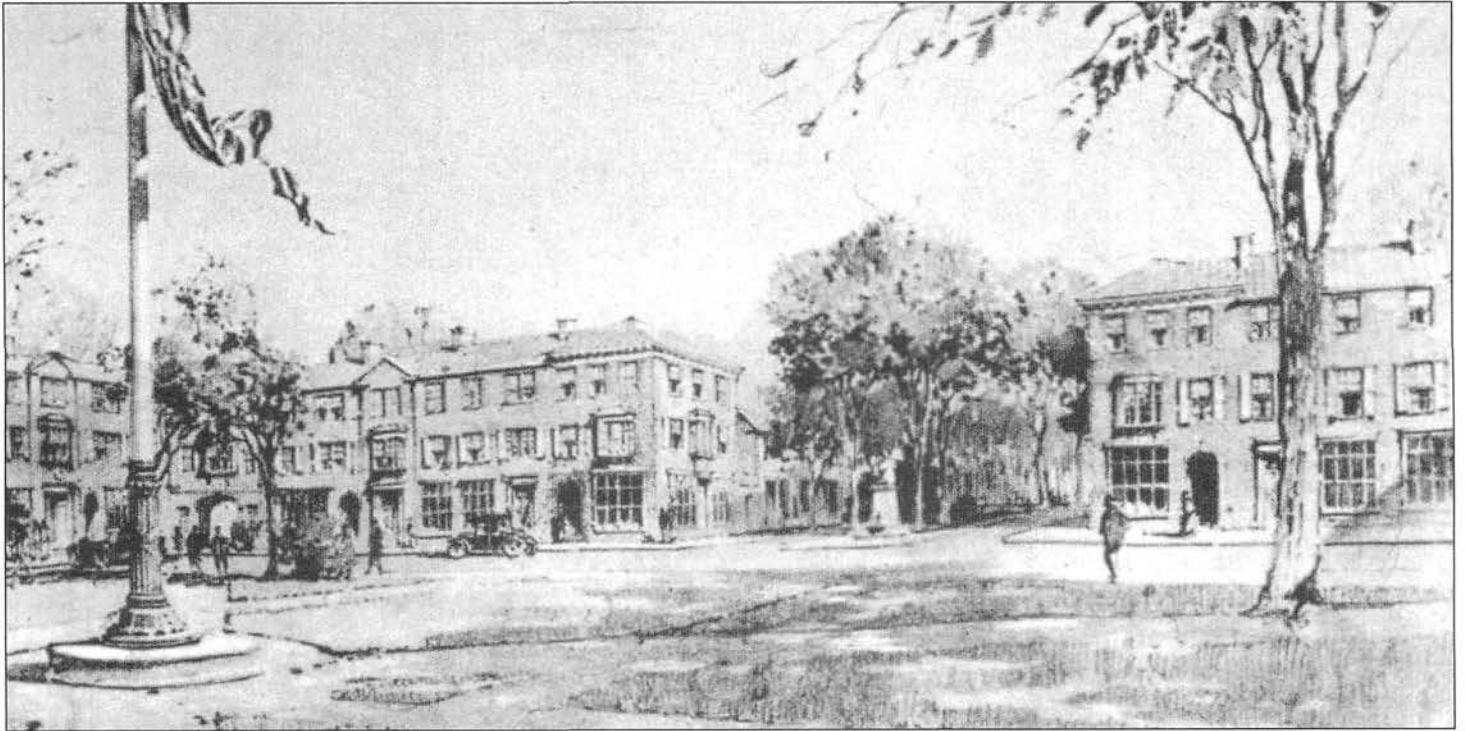
Gréber approached the topic of the tall office building from a functional, as opposed to urbanistic, standpoint, giving a realistic view of high end corporate design. Completed in 1914, the Woolworth Building provided a stunning illustration of the skyscraper as urban microcosm, with multiple entries from the street, a rational interior circulation network, as well as commercial and recreational amenities. In commercial and civic structures, interior spaces had become urban in scale and architectural treatment. As physical and symbolic extensions of the



*Figure 2: Joseph Widener Estate, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, Jacques Gréber landscape architect (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 1:88)*

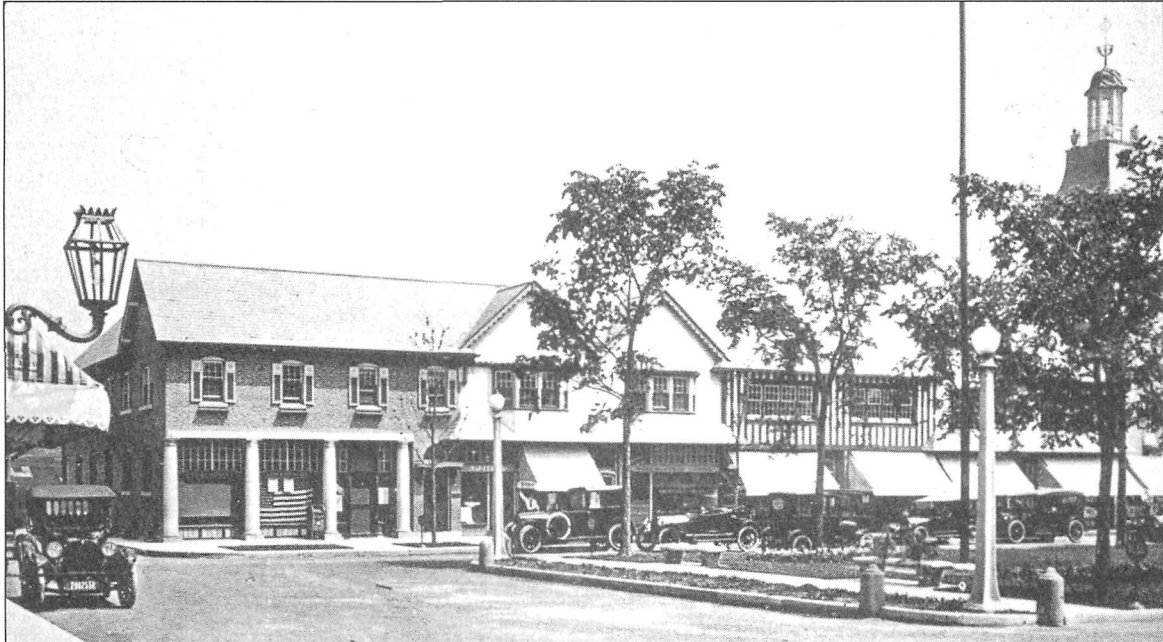


*Figure 3: "Forest Hills Gardens: House types" (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 1:105)*

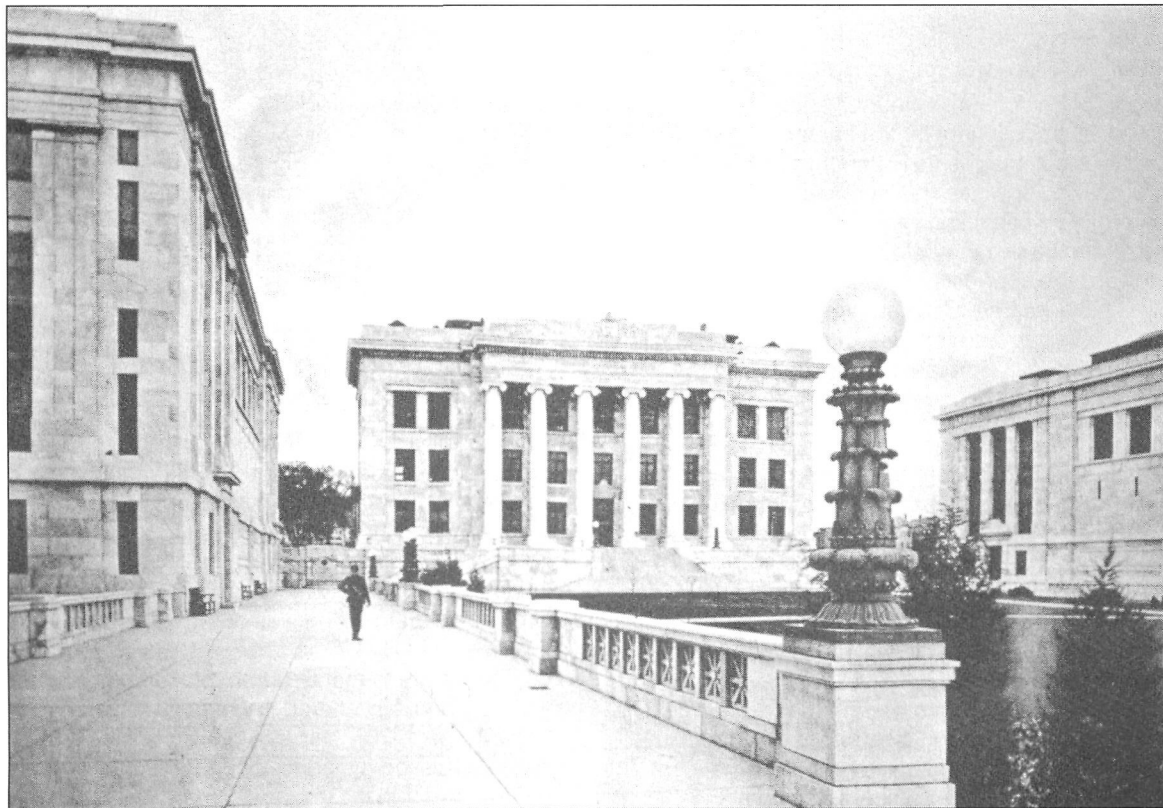


*Figure 4: The main square (top) and house types (bottom) in Yorksbip Village, Camden, New Jersey (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 1:120)*





*Figure 5: Lake Forest Market Square (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 1:110)*



*Figure 6: Harvard Medical School (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 2:77)*

public realm, the great hall of Daniel Burnham's Continental and Commercial Bank Building in Chicago or the reading room of the New York Public Library contributed to the refinement and excitement of metropolitan life. So did more intimate central spaces conducive to repose, like the winter garden of the Cleveland art museum or the patio of the Pan American Union Building in Washington.

Achievements of American architects in the field of civic art were given their first serious examination in France. This was a timely occurrence, since a 1919 law mandated comprehensive planning for French cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants. Ever the advocate of free enterprise, Gréber stressed the fact that American businessmen and philanthropists, as opposed to politicians, were sponsoring plans for the "Haussmanization" of the existing downtown as well as schemes for extension of parks and boulevards. He commended the McMillan Plan for downtown Washington for restoring Major L'Enfant's original scheme. The Mall was to become a "civic center at the scale of the entire country;" its "French garden" would have "*sinon la beauté, inimitable maintenant, mais au moins les grandes harmonies du parc de Versailles.*" Gréber was also sensitive to the fact that federal buildings would be, as in Paris, "erected according to ordinances regulating the height and character of facades." In addition, he presented Burnham's imperial project for a plaza surrounding Union Station as if it was going to be implemented.<sup>23</sup>

Thinking of himself as an heir to L'Enfant, Gréber placed his own planning work for Philadelphia (figure 7)—begun in 1917 when he was hired as a consultant by the Fairmount Park Commission—in the same league as Burnham's.<sup>24</sup> In *Building the City Beautiful*, David Brownlee has attributed credit to Gréber for transforming what is known today as the Benjamin Franklin Parkway "from an urban boulevard to a green wedge of park reaching toward the congested center of the city," in the process smoothing over "some of the awkwardness of the earlier plan" and coming up with the idea of erecting replicas of the twin buildings of the Place de la Concorde on Logan Circle.<sup>25</sup>

Gréber also reproduced illustrations from Burnham and Bennett's 1909 Chicago Plan, telling readers its implementation was under way. A double page (figure 8) showed the layout of Sherman Park, its casino-like combination of recreation room, library and dining hall, as well as the wading pool at Mark White Square filled with joyous children. Public parks would have been of particular interest in France, where the idea of creating playgrounds and sports fields was slowly but surely making its way into the minds of elected officials and design professionals. In addition, a plan and perspective of Bennett's proposals for downtown Ottawa (figure 9), previously published in the journal of the American Institute of Architects, exemplified American planning leadership on the North American continent and Cuba.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to these major topics of interest, two secondary

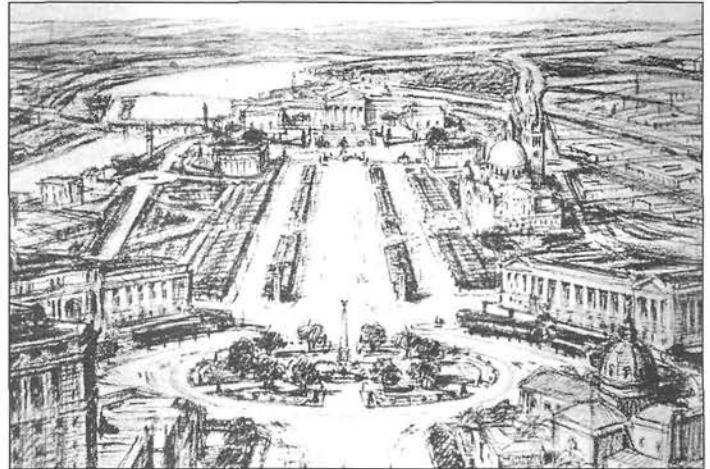


Figure 7: Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, drawing by Jacques Gréber (*L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, 2:151)

themes must be highlighted, as they demonstrate that Gréber's discourse was not exclusively Eurocentric or *franco-français*. Many illustrations translate the characteristically American impression of unrestricted space and grand scale, the strong bond between buildings and the natural landscape. Gréber was attracted to not only neo-classical designs, but also to groups and buildings inspired by the Spanish colonial heritage in Southern California, Texas, and the Southwest. For him, a villa by Bertram Goodhue in Montecito or his plan for the city of Tyrone in New Mexico (figure 10) was a commendable version of regionalism, a movement gaining wide acceptance in France.

*L'Architecture aux États-Unis* must be regarded as an important historical document for urban designers, architects, and students of North American civilization in general. It is worth being revisited, as its repercussions were numerous. In the 1920s, it paved the way for other European publications that praised American interpretations of classicism and the picturesque. Among these, two were equally perceptive and influential: in England, Charles Reilly's essay on McKim, Mead, and White, and in Germany, Werner Hegemann's monumental *Amerikanische Architektur und Stadtbaukunst*, which used many of the same examples.<sup>27</sup> It triggered the evolution of French views of the U.S.-built environment toward greater interest and generally more positive views: in particular, Gréber's alluring vision was pursued in the influential conservative news weekly *L'Illustration*.<sup>28</sup> It served as an important counterweight to that of urban chaos and ludicrous eclecticism that Le Corbusier offered in *Vers une Architecture* (1923) and *Urbanisme* (1925). And even Le Corbusier, when he visited New York, confessed his admiration for railroad terminals and parkways!

Never again was a book of such magnitude written on the subject by a French planner or architect. Many recent mono-

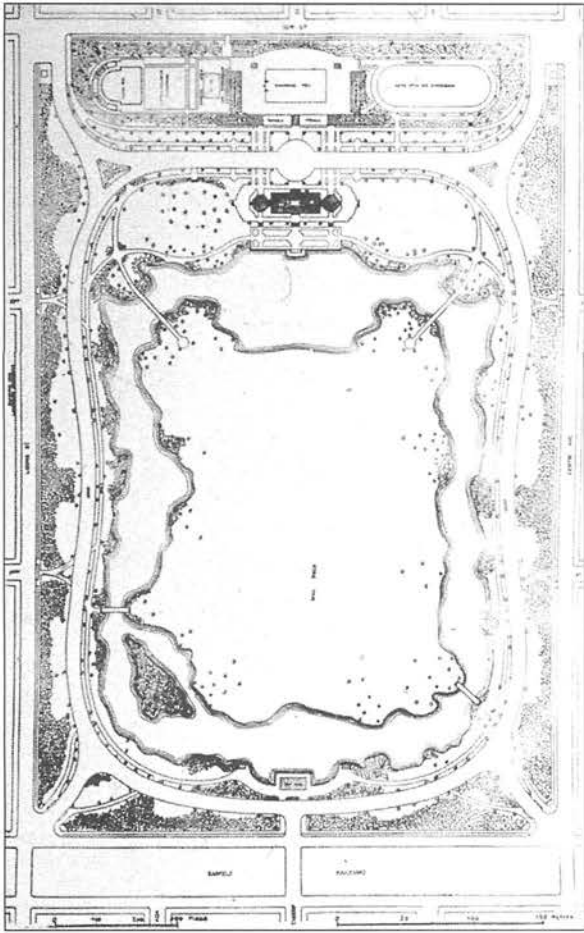
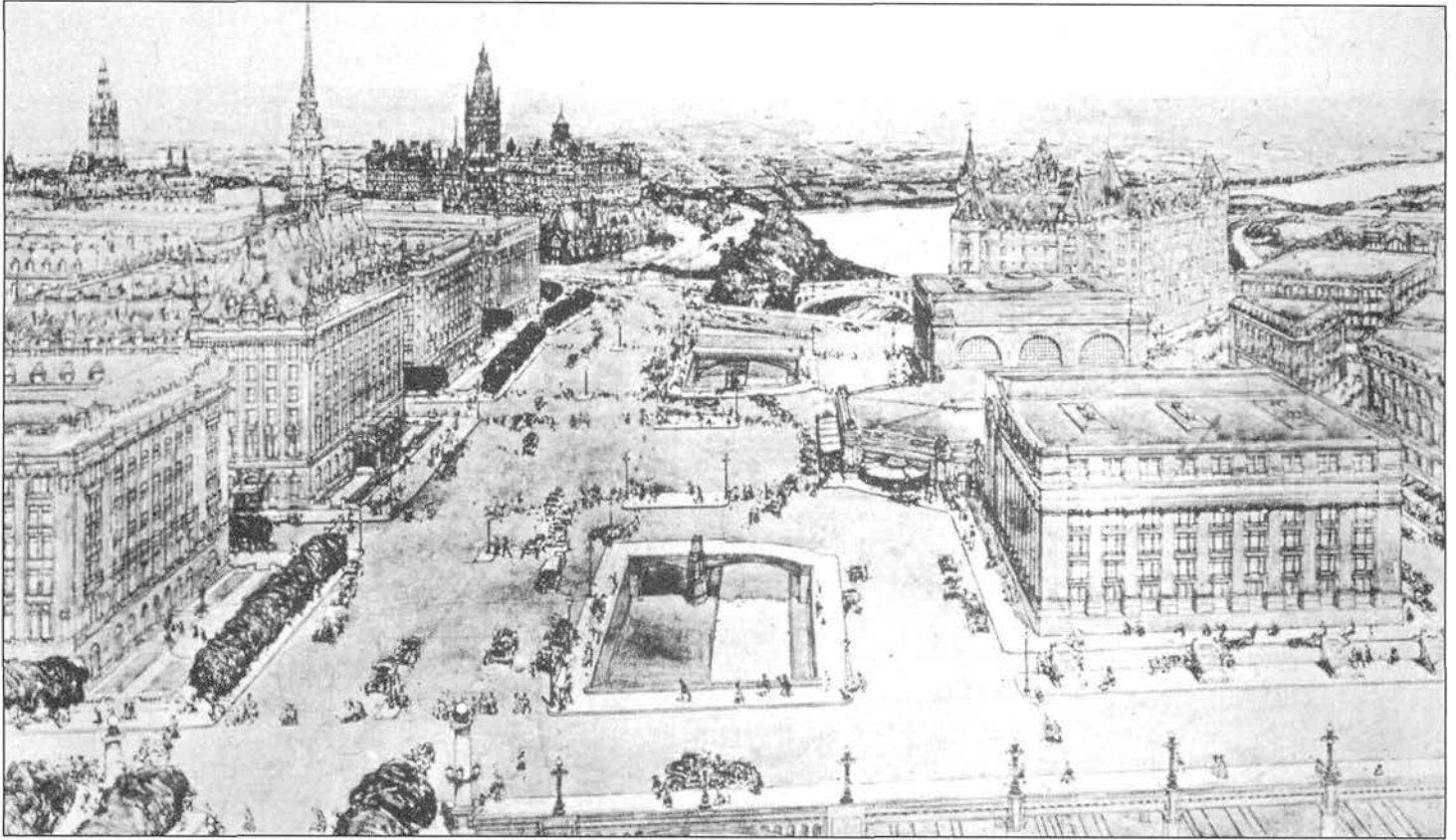


Figure 8: Sherman Park (left and top right) and Mark White Square (bottom right), Chicago (*L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, 2:148-9)

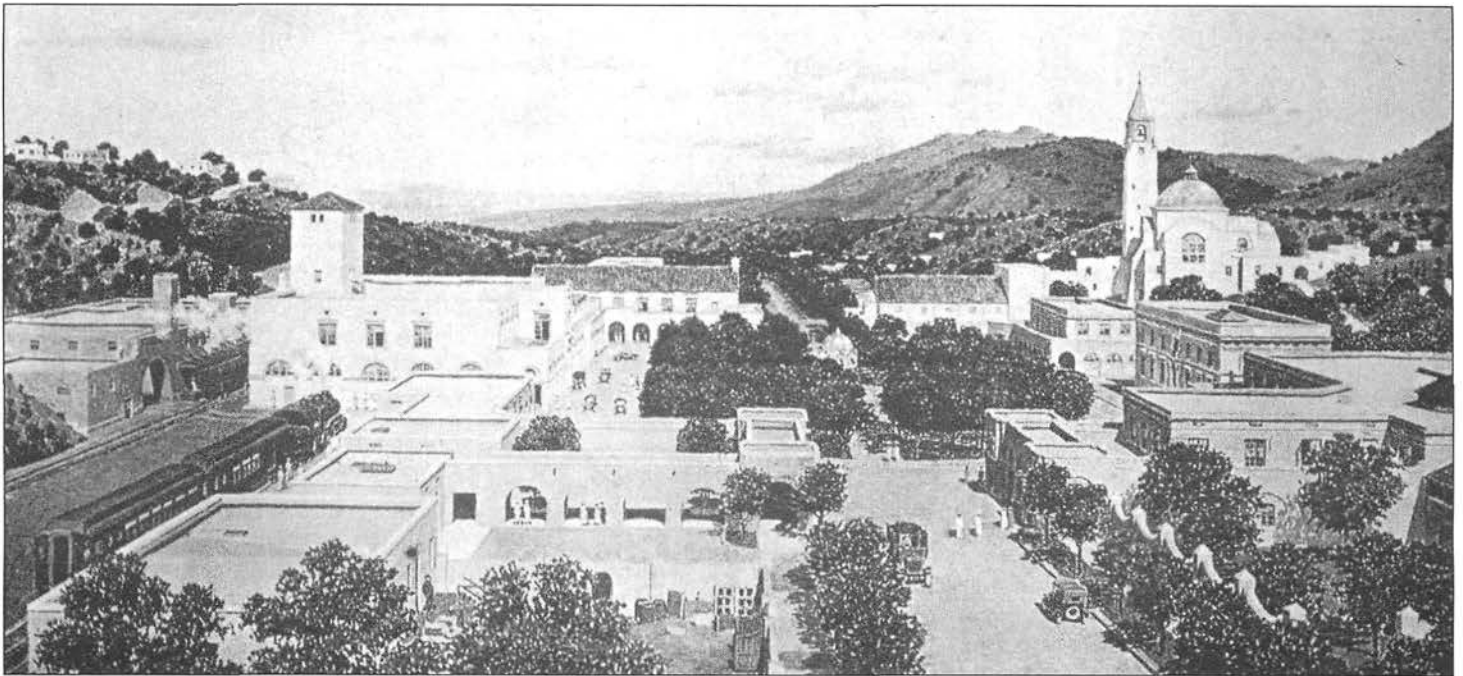
graphs have been published on eclectic and Beaux-Arts-trained designers, but no survey has encompassed the achievements of the American Renaissance by examining as broad a spectrum of building types as Gréber did. It must also be noted that Gallic chauvinism has not subsided: today French design professionals and intellectuals still tend to select and discuss aspects of North American planning and architecture in terms of their indebtedness to "precedents" from the Old World. Additionally, it is regrettable that the appreciation of planning and architecture, which worked hand in hand in *L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, went separate ways, and that few European writings on North American design give much attention to practical, readily applicable details as Gréber did.

In *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* Gréber formulated ideas about modern North America civic centres, business districts, parks, and suburbs, which would orient his proposals for Ottawa, described in this issue by David Gordon, as well as affect his French career. André Lortie and Jean-Louis Cohen have written about Gréber's indebtedness to the park and parkway move-

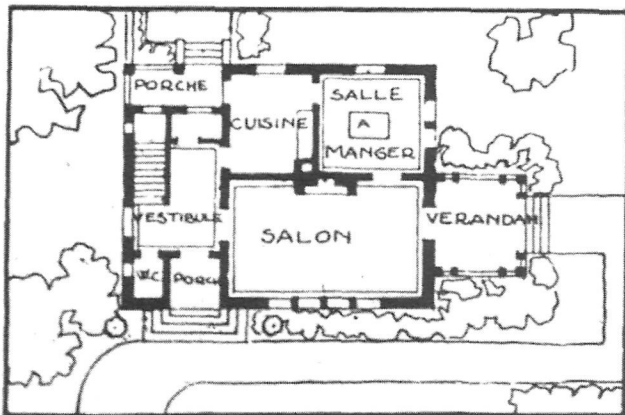
ment, especially in his 1919 project for transforming Paris's fortifications.<sup>29</sup> Gréber's name has not been associated with another significant phenomenon: the import of American suburbia to France. *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* implicitly suggested that American-style decentralization could act as a precedent for the growth of French cities. The model communities it illustrated were the exact opposite of the ill-equipped, sometimes unhealthy *lotissements* of lower middle-class Parisian suburbs. Gréber's direct response to the quasi-paranoid landscape of high walls hiding narrow *pavillons* was the now demolished design for the Cité-Jardin du Moulin Vert, a small limited dividend scheme in Vitry-sur-Seine, as well as a very American-looking project published in 1926 by *Jardins et Cottages* (figure 11).<sup>30</sup> Before the Second World War, the idealized views of suburban living that we have seen served as references for weekend and resort subdivisions. And in 1962, the year of Gréber's death, Levitt and Sons decided to build its first European upscale subdivision a few miles away from Versailles.<sup>31</sup>



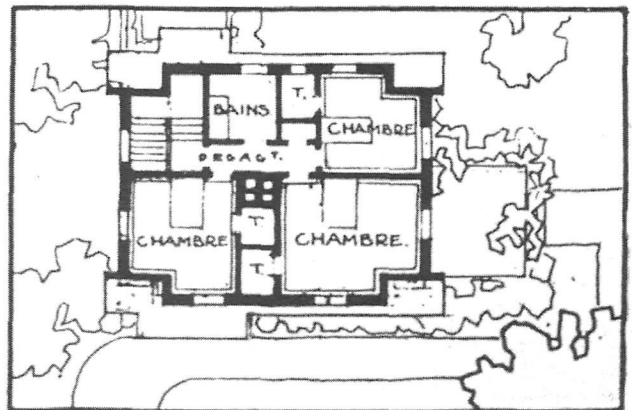
*Figure 9: Ottawa Civic Center, proposal by Edward Bennett (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 2:141)*



*Figure 10: City of Tyrone, New Mexico (L'Architecture aux États-Unis, 2:125)*



*Plan de Rez-de-Chaussée,*



*Plan du Premier Etage,*

Figure 11: "House with a porch," drawing by Jacques Gréber (Jardins et Cottages, 1926, 12)

*L'Architecture aux États-Unis* is also worth revisiting with an eye on postmodern classicism, "new urbanism," and U.S.-style globalization of architectural and planning practice. Since the mid-1970s, Gréber's vision has fully regained its relevance. The urban plans and structures he praised have been resurrected as exemplars of good design and civic virtue. For instance, Yorkship Village (figure 4), one of the war communities illustrated by Gréber and Hegemann, is a favourite of Andres Duany. In today's America as in 1920, well-groomed, high-maintenance planning, landscape, and architecture reflect the image that high-end design professionals and their clients like to give of their physical surroundings and their personal appearance. As a matter of fact, their presumed professionalism, practicality and productivity have recently helped I. M. Pei and Richard Meier win major commissions in Paris. *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* started a process that may well end up with a future book on French architecture, with the subtitle *Proof of the Potential for Expansion of the American Genius: Fortunate Association of Admirably Complementary Qualities*.

#### Notes

1. For previous analysis of *L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, see Jean-Louis Cohen, *Scènes de la Vie Future* (Montréal: Centre Canadien d'Architecture and Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 49–56; Colette Felenback, "L'avènement d'un architecte urbaniste franco-américain," *Les Gréber : Une dynastie des artistes*, exhibition catalogue, Musée Départemental de l'Oise, Beauvais, 1993, 329–35; Isabelle Gournay, "France Discovers America 1917–1939 (French Writings on American Architecture)" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1989); André Lortie, "Jacques Gréber (1882–1962) et l'Urbanisme : le Temps et l'Espace de la Ville" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, Université Paris XII Val-de-Marne, 1997), vol. 1, 47–55.
2. For practically every building illustrated in *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* I was able to trace at least one American publication with similar reproductions. In particular, I found many connections with articles published in *American Architect*, *Architectural Record*, or *Brickbuilder*.
3. The relation between text and visuals was not entirely logical, and that will not come as a surprise for any author having worked with large publishers who often treat iconography as an afterthought.
4. One may think that Gréber, whose book indicates no dates for the building it presented, was deliberately backward-looking in his emphasis on imitative works about two decades old or more. However, let us keep in mind that "prestige" construction in the U.S. had been at a relative standstill since 1915, picking up only by 1922.
5. At the very beginning of the twentieth century, with the exception of *La Construction Moderne*, information on American architecture was not as significant, either in quality and quantity, as in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a period analyzed in Dudley Arnold Lewis, "Evaluations of American Architecture by European Critics, 1875–1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1962).
6. In addition, Gréber's conclusion suggested the creation of a travelling fellowship to allow young French architects to visit the United States. Such a fellowship, administered by the American Institute of Architects, would be created in 1927. For more information, see Isabelle Gournay's introductory essay in *A Retrospective Exhibition of the Delano and Aldrich/Emerson Fellowship* (Washington, DC: American Institute of Architects, 1989), 1–16.
7. See Isabelle Gournay, "Americans Studying Architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts," in *Paris Bound: Americans in Art Schools 1868–1918*, exhibition catalogue, Musée de la Coopération Franco-Américaine, Blérancourt, Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1990, 47–54.
8. A particularly vocal anti-Beaux-Arts designer whose work was well represented in *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* was Ralph Adams Cram. Gréber's Eurocentrism infuriated Talbot Faulkner Hamlin (his was the longest review of the book I could find in an English-speaking publication). In "French Influence in American Architecture: Concerning Propaganda in the Art which Should Be Most Above It," *Arts and Decoration*, 16 (February 1922): 273 and 323, this influential critic declared that Gréber did "not realize that what seems to him archaeological only is a true and inevitable expression of our culture. He does not realize that our very style eclecticism is a truly American thing . . . We mix periods, we invent new combinations of forms. The styles for us have become merely materials, never laws."
9. Gréber "previewed" *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* in a special American issue of the scholarly *Revue de Synthèse Historique* 29 (July–December 1919): 189–204.
10. Showing 300 works by 88 American architects, this retrospective provided the first opportunity for a large display of American architecture in Paris since the 1900 World's Fair. Gréber's text for a slide lecture at the salon was reproduced in "Société des Artistes Français : L'Architecture aux États-Unis," *Bulletin de la SADG* 16 (July 1, 1921): 159–63; (August 1–15, 1921): 196–80.<sup>1</sup>
11. See Jacques Gréber, *L'Organisation des Travaux d'Architecture aux États-Unis*, Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1919. On this mission, see "French Architects Visit this Country," *American Architect* 116 (July 30, 1919): 148, which mentioned as other participants three engineers, one contractor, and the Philadelphia-based architect Paul Cret; and Isabelle Gournay, "Retours d'Amérique 1918–1960: les voyages de trois générations d'architectes français," in *Américanisme et Modernité : L'Idéal Américain dans l'Architecture*, ed. Jean-Louis Cohen and Hubert Damisch (Paris: EHESS/Flammarion, 1993), 294–316. *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* was dedicated to the Philadelphia millionaire Joseph E. Widener, one of Gréber's major clients, patron of the arts, and philanthropist, as well as to André Tardieu, who masterminded France's relations with the U.S. during the war. Its foreword was by the popular writer and noted scientific management advocate Victor Cambon. Lesser known today, but also important in Gréber's rationale, was the significant role played during the war by several American Beaux-Arts architects in relief organizations such as the Red Cross, as told in Isabelle Gournay, "Le concours des architectes américains," in *Les Américains et la France 1917–1947. Engagements et Représentations*, eds. François Cohet, Marie-Claude Genet-Delacroix and Hélène Trocmé (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1999), 124–141. At a time when French gratitude was turning into acrimony over U.S. foreign policy, paying homage to their generosity and efficiency was Gréber's contribution to maintaining the climate of political entente between the two allied countries.
12. Firmin Roz, "Naissance de l'originalité dans l'architecture," *Les États-Unis d'Amérique* (Paris, 1927), 216–9. Explicit references to *L'Architecture aux États-Unis* can be found in Jean Labadié, "Les cathédrales de la Cité Moderne," *L'Illustration* 80 (August 12, 1922): 135, and Edouard Herriot, *Impressions d'Amérique* (Lyon: N. Audin, 1923), 81.
13. Louis Dimier, "Les Salons," *L'Architecture* 34 (May 25, 1921): 5–6, 20–29; Louis Gillet, "L'Art aux États-Unis et au Canada," in *Histoire de l'Art depuis le Premiers Temps Chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, ed. André Michel (Paris: Armand Colin, 1929), t. 8,<sup>2</sup> vol. 3, 1175; Alexandre Persitz, "Cités Universitaires," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 6 (June 1936): 10; *Wasmuth Lexicon der Baukunst* 4 (1932): 622–9.
14. The Roslyn, Long Island commission came about through his father, Henri-Léon Gréber, a well-known sculptor whose work was also featured in the property.
15. On Edward T. Stotesbury's Whitmarsh Hall, see James T. Maher, *The*

## **Revisiting Jacques Gréber's L'Architecture aux États-Unis**

- Twilight of Splendor: Chronicles of the Age of American Palaces* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), 1–88. Miramar and the Philadelphia gardens were designed in conjunction with Horace Trumbauer, a prolific practitioner catering to the *nouveaux riches*, whose residential and commercial work was extensively featured in *L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, although he had no formal design background. Design was chiefly the responsibility of Trumbauer's chief designer Julian Abele, an African-American graduate of the University of Pennsylvania (for whom, contrary to Colette Feltenback's assumption in *Les Gréber. Une dynastie des artistes*, 331, there is no evidence of studies at the Paris École des Beaux-Arts). In effect, because his work was judged too archaeological and his behaviour too opportunistic, Trumbauer was shunned by his Beaux-Arts-trained colleagues who refused him access to the local chapter of the AIA until 1931.
16. See "Jardin à la française," *L'Architecte* (June 1912): 28, plate 33; André Dezarrois, "L'Influence Française dans l'Art des Jardins en Amérique : Les Jardins de M. Jacques Gréber," *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne* 40 (1921): 173; Raymond de Passillé, "Les Jardins Français aux États-Unis : Créations de MM. Duchesne et Gréber," *La Gazette Illustrée des Amateurs de Jardins* 1925, 16–34.
  17. For a recent reappraisal of Gréber's American gardens, see Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, "Green Grandeur: American Estate Gardening in the French style 1890–1940," *Antiques* 140 (September 1991): 386–401 (p. 390: "French gardens never became as popular as either English or Renaissance ones, perhaps because of the residual doubts about the style's suitability to democratic America"); and *The Golden Age of American Gardens: Proud Owners. Private Estates 1890–1940* (New York: H. N. Abrams, in association with the Garden Club of America, 1991), 32, 98–9, and 128–31. See also Robert B. Mackay, Anthony K. Baker, and Carol A. Traynor, eds., *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860–1940* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 114–5, for an illustration of Gréber's more modest but exquisite work at the Walter E. Maynard Residence (Ogden Codman, architect). In *L'Architecture aux États-Unis*, Gréber did not refer to his countryman and rival in the art of formal French gardening in the New World, Achille Duchêne.
  18. As evidenced by his article "What Shall Be Done to the Cathedral of Reims," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (1919): 315–6, Gréber was most likely acquainted with the reformist group involved with this journal, which had been a major advocate of federally funded war-housing communities, patterned after those already built in Great Britain.
  19. For a reference to this Germanic imagery, see Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (New York: Verso, 1995), 112. Atterbury's heavy prefabrication process did not prove economical. Intended as a planning experiment for the middle class, Forest Hills Gardens soon became an upscale neighbourhood.
  20. "Études d'habitations économiques suivant deux programmes" and "Étude d'habitations individuelles avec jardins," *L'Architecture aux Salons* (Paris: Société des Artistes Français – Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1913), plates 75–82.
  21. On the activities of the United States Shipping Board and Emergency Fleet Corporation, see Bruce I. Bustard, "Homes for War Workers: Federal Housing Policy during World War I," *Prologue* 24 (1992): 33–43.
  22. In 1921, Gréber prepared sketches for the landscaping of the court of honour at M.I.T., which were reproduced in H. J. Carlson, "The Grounds and Their Development," *Tech Engineering News* 3 (November 1922): 138.
  23. Lortie, *Jacques Gréber (1882–1962)*, 50, points out that, in his plans for Philadelphia, Gréber focused on principles of "civic art" and did not apply ideas related to the concept of zoning, which was beginning to gain prominence among U.S. city planners.
  24. Lortie, *Jacques Gréber (1882–1962)*, 51, points out that Gréber's plans for Philadelphia related to ideas that local architect Clarence Zantlinger, a former student of the Paris École des Beaux-Arts, had suggested as early as 1908.
  25. David B. Brownlee, *Building the City Beautiful: The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, exhibition catalogue, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989, 30–7. See also André Lortie, "La ville métropole: entre image et organisation" (Paris: Picard, 1995), 53–55. Following the same pattern as his countryman Joseph-Antoine Bouvard in Buenos Aires, Gréber envisioned other diagonal boulevards cutting into William Penn's grid.
  26. Edward H. Bennett, "A Plan for Ottawa, the Capital of the Dominion of Canada," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 4 (1916): 263–8. As opposed to Gréber's assertion in the captions, Daniel Burnham could not have acted on the project as advisor, since he had died before Bennett received the Ottawa commission.
  27. Charles Reilly, *McKim, Mead and White* (London: E. Benn Ltd., 1924); Werner Hegemann, *Amerikanische Architektur und Stadtbaukunst* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1924); this book was derived from *Civic Art: The American Vitruvius* (New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1922), which Hegemann had co-written with Elbert Peets).
  28. In *L'illustration* 85 (September 24, 1927), see Georges Wybo, "Les Architectes Américains," 287–8; Louis Thomas, "Universités, Écoles, Bibliothèques," 294–5, "La transformation d'un quartier au centre d'une grande cite," 296–7; Louis Thomas, "Jardins et Palais d'Amérique," 298–304. See also Georges Benoit-Lévy, "La Cité-Jardin à l'étranger," and "L'habitation à l'étranger," *L'illustration* 87 (March 30, 1929): n.p.
  29. André Lortie, "Détour par les États-Unis," *Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale* 32–33 (1993), 13–24, and Cohen, *Scènes de la Vie Future*, 55.
  30. The Moulin-Vert project is described in Paul Chemetov, Marie-Jeanne Dumont, and Bernard Marrey, *Paris-Banlieue 1919–1939* (Paris: Dunod, 1989), 205–6; G. Rémond, "La belle demeure dans la Cité-Jardin" *Jardins et Cottages* (June 1926): 78–82.
  31. I discuss Gréber's role in "Romance, Prejudice and Levitt's Americanization of the middle class single family home in France," in *National Stereotypes in Perspective: Americans in France—Frenchmen in America*, ed. William Chew (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).