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California Architecture and Its Relation to Contemporary Trends in Europe and America

THE CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC of California architecture is colonialism. For more than two hundred years, successive waves of immigrants have domesticated in California the cultural conditions of the diverse nations and regions from which they emigrated. This is true of the Spanish who in the eighteenth century established those foundations which we celebrate on occasion and of the Americans who in the next century overwhelmed them. It is true as well of the northern Indians who carried their Siberian wood culture to the Pacific Coast in immemorial times and of the eastern-based architectural firms which are responsible for the important building in our own times. Wherever their place of origin, and however daring or innovative their natures generally may be, immigrants are always cultural conservatives, and no group among them is more tradition-bound than are the members of the building profession. As a consequence, California architecture is not, as legend so often has it, an organic representation of such regional conditions as the land, the climate, or native building materials. Rather it is a visual projection of the continuing world-wide immigration that today, as always, is the central fact of California culture.

American historians all too frequently assume that a new land necessarily means a new culture, or at least a radically transformed one. In this connection it is well to recall the statement regarding the paradoxical nature of the national culture made at mid-nineteenth century by the sculptor Horatio Greenough: "We forget that though the country was young, yet the people were old."¹ In the two centuries that concern us, California has been responsible for no new important building techniques; it has initiated no major architectural trends nor has it advanced any significant architectural theo-

NOTE: By special arrangement with the Institute of American History at Stanford University, the California Historical Society is privileged to publish a series of papers prepared by nine distinguished historians and read before a conference celebrating California's bicentennial, held at Stanford in 1970. Some of the essays will be published first in the *Quarterly* and all will be issued by the Society next spring in a book entitled *New Perspectives on California History*. The series, introduced with two essays in the last issue, is carried forward with the following essay and Gerald D. Nash's interpretation of California's economic growth, beginning on page 315.

ries. With few exceptions, her noteworthy builders have been mature immigrants who, from generation to generation, have built in California from the memory of former places and in the manner of previously learned habits. As David Gebhard has truly written, "architecture as a fine art has only touched this environment in the lightest of ways."² Man adapts only by reason of necessity. In two hundred years there has been little effort to develop an architecture out of the California environment simply because there has been no need for such an effort. In so vast an area, encompassing as it does almost every possible terrain, climate, and material condition, and settled by people from almost every known race, nation, and region, it is inevitable that almost every conceivable building culture would be imposed upon the country and has flourished here.

The study of a colonial culture begins with the people who came. Elsewhere, I have discussed the national origins and professional backgrounds of architects who came to California in the nineteenth century. Happily for the model therein established, the same general pattern of northeastern American nativity and European training continues on in our own century. As is typical of colonists everywhere, few among the immigrant-architects responded creatively to the California environment. There are of course notable exceptions, such as Bernard Maybeck and Irving Gill, both of whom were born in New York and began their California practices in the early nineties. These designers happen also to be among the half-dozen most important architects to practice in California in the last two centuries, and cannot be taken as typical of the profession in anything excepting their high standards of training. On the contrary, the profession at large has always been distinguished by extreme colonialism. Indeed, the stature of a man within the ranks has traditionally been measured by the degree to which his work parallels, or more accurately follows, contemporary fashions in the eastern United States. In this California merely mirrors the national experience, for the eastern practitioners so consistently imitated on the Pacific Coast were themselves almost without exception followers of contemporary European trends.

The difference in architectural colonialism practiced everywhere in the United States vis à vis Europe is a question only of degree and time. Because the West Coast has traditionally received her European illuminations indirectly by way of Boston and New York, the cultural time lag in California is not only greater than that in the northeastern states but the resulting product is usually a twice-distilled essence. Occasionally the West Coast has bested the East in the race for European stylistic accommodation. A noteworthy instance was the introduction at mid-nineteenth century of Beaux-Arts Classicism by Ecole-trained immigrant-architects more than a generation before the style took hold in New York. A more typical example is the route by which the architecture of the New Brutalism arrived in California.

This still evolving and confused style originated in the post-World War II work of the Smithsons in England and Le Corbusier in France; it was established in the northeastern United States in the early Eisenhower years and first appeared in the West in 1960 with the design of Wurster Hall on the Berkeley campus of the University of California. The cultural lag in this case was approximately a decade. Through most of the nineteenth century, when California was a remote sea frontier and the means of stylistic transmission was either memory or pattern books, the cultural lag was likely to be a generation. But beginning in 1869 with the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the subsequent publication of American professional architectural journals, the lag was halved, as in the example of the New Brutalism. This same process was concurrently going on between the eastern seaboard and Europe, and the fact of California's architectural colonialism is less surprising when viewed against a continuing national colonialism. If only a handful of California architects have responded creatively to the environment, the record for the United States at large is proportionately hardly better.

Two basic building techniques have dominated California construction: the Mediterranean masonry and North European wood traditions. Taken together they encompass almost the entire range of architectural effort on the Pacific Coast in the last two hundred years and suggest the schizoid character of our building culture. Both techniques are colonial and each is identified with one of the several competing cultures which contested for control in California in her first modern century. Although the masonry tradition is generally associated with the southern part of the state and the wood tradition with the northern, they are not so simply localized. Nor is it easy to assign chronological priorities. Long before the masonry tradition was established in California by Franciscan missionaries, an offshoot of the Siberian wood culture was practiced by Indians in the extreme northern counties. Furthermore, in the period of the best mission building, the masonry tradition was aggressively challenged by a Russian colonial version of the same wood culture planted along the northern Sonoma coast. The American adaptation of the North European wood tradition also successfully challenged the adobe building culture at all points of contact south of San Francisco—particularly in the provincial capital of Monterey, where the superiority of American techniques was first demonstrated by New England merchants and seamen. With American annexation in 1846, the Mediterranean masonry tradition went into a half-century quietus, to be resurrected finally as a regional response to the national Colonial Revival that swept the country after the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876. But previous to this, and after a long and confused cycle of stylistic variations, the American frame tradition entered its most enduring and creative phase as the Shingle style, the regional response to which is sometimes called the San Francisco Bay Tradi-

tion. In discussing the relationship between architecture in California and contemporary trends in Europe and the northeastern United States, I will limit myself to the Mediterranean masonry and American wood building traditions and the immigrant-architects who practiced them in the period between maturation in the first half of the nineteenth century and the several revivals of these forms between 1890 and 1930.

Both the Mediterranean and North European building cultures reached California after prolonged stages of determined colonialism in Mexico and New England. In each case there was a minimum of adaptation to the New World environment and a maximum adherence to previously learned techniques and remembered styles. The masonry tradition introduced by Franciscans at San Diego subsequent to 1769 was a Mexican variant of a much earlier building legacy left to Spain by successive waves of Roman and Moorish colonizers. It was coincidental that this colonial offshoot was admirably suited to the coastal plains of Southern California, with their familiar lack of wood, water, and shade. The true cultural conservatism of the Spanish colonizers was shortly and tragically demonstrated, however, in their stubborn refusal to alter formerly mastered masonry techniques even in the face of the new and recurring phenomenon of earthquake. The only important concession made to the California environment by the Franciscan builders was an increased use of adobe brick in place of stone in architectural construction. But this did not represent a break with the inherited Mediterranean masonry tradition, for at the time of colonization the typical farm house in both Old and New Spain was constructed either of rubble stone or mud blocks. As a matter of fact, the results of Franciscan building in California were anticipated in an earlier experience in New Mexico, where, according to George Kubler, there was also "wood without tools to work it, stone without equipment to move it, and clay without kilns to fire it."³ In each case the result was the simplification of inherited techniques and not material or structural invention.

In matters of style as well as technique, the Spanish-Mexicans proved to be severe conservatives. Despite the statement of Father Englehardt that the Franciscan builders drew their architectural inspiration directly from the land, every feature of the so-called California mission style owes its origin to Mexican models. Certainly the Franciscans' lack of professional architectural knowledge and the difficulty of recruiting skilled craftsmen accounts in part for the plain surfaces, the strongly scaled and abstract character of California mission architecture. Equally important, however, is the fact that at the time of colonization the Baroque movement, and especially its Churrigueresque phase, had already given way both in Old and New Spain to Neoclassical simplicity. As Kurt Baer has pointed out, Mexican Neoclassicism was particularly marked by a revival of Roman-temple forms, and this is evident in the best of the Spanish-Mexican work in California,

such as the mission church at Santa Barbara, whose façade is taken from a plate in a Spanish edition of Vitruvius. The simplification in building techniques and the clarification of forms which distinguish Franciscan architecture in California does not therefore constitute a break with Mediterranean building traditions; rather it represents at once both the latest colonial version of a major European style as well as a reversion to the earliest Franciscan building in the New World.

The American version of the North European wood building tradition, introduced in California only slightly later than the Mediterranean masonry one, was also a product of several hundred years of determined colonialism. Investigations of the largely English-medieval origin of North American colonial architecture prove, as in the earlier experience in Mexico, that modifications were made with great reluctance and tended toward uniformity and simplification rather than innovation or invention. The wide variety of English medieval roofing techniques, for example, gave way uniformly in New England to shingles; the diversification in wall surfaces was reduced to common clapboards. Both these techniques have long histories in Old England and were particularly common in East Anglia, that region from which New England immigration in the seventeenth century so conspicuously flowed. But whereas in the Old World these forms were absorbed within a rich and diverse matrix, in the New World they became dominant, and gave to American colonial building a much remarked upon linearity and thinness which is sometimes extended beyond architecture to represent a national cultural characteristic. The American distillation of the English version of the North European wood tradition not only underwent several hundred years of material adaptation before it was introduced into California, but again like the Mexican example, it underwent stylistic simplification in the transition to the austere Greek phase of Neoclassicism. The resulting American wood frame model, already tightened, hardened, and simplified, proved to be an invincible importation. It not only conquered the architectural field in the decade preceding annexation but has continued to this day as the dominant building form on the Pacific Coast.

It is difficult to say which of the two competing colonial cultures in California embodied the staunchest architectural conservatism. The original area of settlement was in each case a matter of fortuity: the Spanish immigrated to the Andalusian-like southern coastal plains and the Americans to the forested regions from Monterey northward. But even if chance had not settled the several immigrant groups in an environment congenial to their cultures and accessible to traditional building materials, the outcome would have been predictable. For the Spanish who established remote outposts on the edge of the redwood forests built with adobe; the Americans, whether on the treeless plains of Los Angeles or the sandy wastes of San Francisco, reproduced just as stubbornly their traditional wood frame dwellings. Such

determined colonialism is only partially explained by the state's wide range of material possibilities and the relatively primitive state of Indian building. A more relevant explanation lies in the long colonial experience of each of the immigrant peoples. The earlier history of the Spanish in Mexico demonstrates how little architectural adaptation took place even when, as in the example of the Aztecs, there was a sophisticated native masonry tradition and a highly skilled body of workers to draw upon. Nor, contrary to Frederick Jackson Turner, did the New World wilderness put the English colonists in "the log cabin of the Cherokee." Indeed, that celebrated frontier institution was a Scandinavian version of the North European wood tradition introduced into Delaware by Swedish colonists in the seventeenth century; its subsequent adoption by Creek Indians, for example, in the following century is one of the ironic footnotes of American cultural history.

The problem of colonialism and adaptation is illustrated in what may be taken as a regional complement to the eastern log cabin myth, that is the notion that the use of tar as a building material originated in California with the early discovery of the brea pits in Los Angeles and the asphalt deposits near Santa Barbara. Actually, asphalt in one form or another is among the most ancient construction materials known to man, and was especially common to the Mediterranean cultures. Nor were tar roofs unknown in Old England at the time of colonization, and they were constructed, although infrequently, in New England all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is not probable, however, that many American builders in California were familiar at first hand with this kind of construction; at any rate, they were much slower to revert to the ancient technique than were the Spanish-Mexicans, whose asphalt-roofed adobes were remarked upon by New Englanders as early as 1829. The reason for this is that, again contrary to legend, the dwellings of the *Californios* were not roofed with Spanish tiles and, in the absence of an alternative such as shingles, they turned to the available tar deposits as a ready means of roofing. After shingle roofs became popular in California in the late 1830's, asphalt ceased to be widely used, and it was only in the mid-1850's that enterprising Yankees began its manufacture as a fire-preventive material. In the twentieth century the flat tar roof became an urban architectural phenomenon, especially associated in California with speculative row housing. Its ultimate inclusion within the vocabulary of both the Spanish and American builders suggests the largely accidental relationship existing in California between inherited building traditions and the extraordinary variety of climatic and material resources.

The Mexican and New England versions of the two traditional European building cultures reached maturity in California within a generation. The former is best exemplified by the fourth mission church at Santa Barbara, completed in 1815; the latter had its major development twenty years later

when Thomas Oliver Larkin, U. S. consul in Monterey, began construction of his famous timber-framed, shingle-roofed, adobe-walled house. By this time, 1835, the mission establishments were largely deserted, and Franciscan influences in California were negligible. On the other hand, the American frame house was soon to begin its spectacular conquest of the West Coast building field. But before victory came compromise. In the brief melding at Monterey of the antithetical adobe and wood traditions we have a unique instance in California of an important accommodation by the competing colonial cultures. The reason for the compromise was a temporary limitation of labor and equipment that prevented the construction of a completely timbered dwelling. The result is known as the Monterey Colonial style. But excepting the use of adobe in exterior walls, Larkin's house embodied the typical architectural components of New England Neoclassicism as remembered by the builder from his boyhood home in Massachusetts.

A study of the graphic materials relating to California in the several decades following annexation reveals the architectural triumph of the American wood tradition. Whether one consults G. R. Fardon photographs of San Francisco, the anonymous daguerreotype panoramas of lesser coastal towns, or the Kuchel and Dressel lithographs of mining communities, all record the same white-painted frame houses, churches, schools, and courthouses with their hesitant touches of Greek or Gothic ornament. Exceptions to these modest buildings, which so remarkably resemble the village architecture of the northeastern United States of the previous generation, show up occasionally in the San Francisco photographs, and give elusive yet tantalizing evidence of the brilliant international immigration of 1849-50. Here are pictured not only those previously mentioned first monuments of Beaux-Arts Classicism in the United States, but early important examples of other Renaissance cognate styles. Someday, perhaps, scholars will deal worthily with the European authors of this little known gold rush architecture—with men such as the Belgian Peter Portois; William Patton, the associate of the English Gothicist Sir Gilbert Scott; the mysterious Victor Hoffman; the Scotsman David Farquharson, whose architectural library served as an education for a whole generation of San Francisco designers. For the most part, however, architecture in the fifties and sixties was decidedly out of date, reflecting the generational cultural lag persisting until at least 1869. It tells us much about the American past of the California pioneers but reveals little of the revolution in building that was going on in the eastern United States in the quarter-century that followed the construction of Larkin's prototype at Monterey. This was the phenomenon Vincent Scully has named the Stick style, and which in time developed into California's first urban architectural vernacular.

Although the Stick style derived ultimately from the picturesque phase of late-eighteenth century English Neoclassicism, architectural historians

credit it as the first “uniquely American expression of timber form.”⁴ The earlier variants of the North European wood tradition which we have considered, such as the late English-medieval or even the Swedish log cabin, are indeed distinguishable from Old World prototypes, but they are not fundamentally different in material or construction. The Stick style, however, assumed a characteristically American cast by combining the recently developed light “balloon” frame construction with a simplified “Gothic-Swiss” stylistic formula. The philosophical basis of the style in Jacksonian democratic theory has often been remarked upon, and certainly the success of the movement in California resulted largely from the fact it gave the state its first mass urban architecture. The earliest American propagandist of the Stick style was the New York landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing, who expounded his aesthetic and egalitarian theories in a series of pattern books published in the 1840’s and 1850’s. His principal regional disciple, Henry William Cleaveland, arrived in San Francisco in 1850 and six years later published his own *Village and Farm Cottages*. But Cleaveland’s early work in California, so far as it can be identified, was wholly derivative, and it was not until the late 1870’s that his important Stick designs were widely copied on the West Coast. By that time the style was hopelessly enmeshed in a fantasy of Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Eastlake components which can best be described as the Bay Window vernacular.

The development of this awesome vernacular required more than the breakdown of stylistic discipline resulting from a quarter-century of rapidly shifting imported building fashions. Specifically, there had to be the need for mass housing and the means of exploiting this need. San Francisco’s population growth, which went unchecked since the gold rush, supplied the need; cooperative building associations and private speculators furnished the capital. And the architects stood ready with their designs. As was earlier remarked, the Stick style was as much a social as an architectural movement, dedicated, as one of its propagandists stated, to “The Toiling Millions, Whose Means are Small, yet Whose Desires are Great to possess a Home, where Industry and Contentment shall be household gods, and Independence be allied with Happiness.”⁵ This was underscored in Cleaveland’s popular pattern book, which offered designs for cottages costing as little as \$500. In an inflationary period such as our own, it is perhaps unkind to note that almost thirty years after the publication of Cleaveland’s book, the Massachusetts-born educator John Pelton could still offer plans for cottages costing \$500. But this was 1882, and the demand was then for urban housing, hence his most popular model was a two-story row house that could be constructed for under \$1200. The acceptance of this and similar Stick prototypes by the Real Estate Association of San Francisco, which constructed many thousand such houses under long-term financing, was crucial in the creation of the vernacular.

In San Francisco's ebullient "Champagne Days" the Stick style acquired a Second Empire roof, sharply incised Eastlake ornament, and a helter-skelter surface of shingles and boards contemporaneously described as more Mary Anne than Queen Anne. This highly eclectic vernacular is generally dismissed as merely the architectural counterpart of a restless, confused, but supremely confident society. It is something more, however; something rare in California: the transformation, no matter how minimal, of colonial architectural forms as a result of regional environmental conditions. San Francisco, with its continually alternating fog and sunshine, is a city of strong contrasts. The light is flooding and the shadows deep. These conditions proved ideal for the propagation of Stick architecture, whose character depends upon shadows thrown across the surface by projecting structural members. It was the distinction of the San Francisco row house that no structural member (nor for that matter any non-structural one) was denied the privilege of projection. And in the regional vernacular the least inhibited projection was the bay window. These billowing sheets of glass, enclosed in whimsically ornamented frames and crowned with pierced entablatures and bracketed pediments, are to San Francisco of the 1870's and 1880's what brownstone was to an earlier New York. The bay window is not a native invention; indeed, it was specifically prescribed by Downing himself as a means of multiplying the range of contrast so essential to the style. But whatever the origin of the various components making up the Bay Window vernacular, their coming together in a genuinely regional juxtaposition gave California its first and most wondrous urban housing. The exuberance of this conglomerate style has found belated appeal to an increasing crowd of Neo-Victorians in revolt against the bleak dimensions of contemporary housing. At the time, however, Sir Charles Eastlake, whose designs were widely plagiarized in the development of the San Francisco row house, dismissed the vernacular as an "extravagant and bizarre burlesque." It was this; but it was also the best fun that architects have had in California in two centuries.

The cultural colonialism involved in this architectural fantasy is apparent: the Second Empire was a French importation; Queen Anne and Eastlake were but the latest obligations in the cultural debt owed to England by America. Of the three international styles that merged with the native Stick to create the Bay Window vernacular, only the Queen Anne will hold us further, for its transformation into the Shingle phase of the Colonial Revival profoundly influenced California architecture. The American roots of the Shingle style lie in the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876. Here, in the British government buildings, Americans were introduced to the shingled, half-timbered, Old-English cottage architecture that, for reasons still mysterious, was called Queen Anne; here also was the first serious reconstruction of a Japanese frame building, it, too, covered with small shingles; finally, both in the philosophy of the Exposition and in the New

England exhibit was the germ for that series of regional colonial revivals which practically delineate California architecture from 1890 to 1930. The specific psychological and material conditions which account for the national Colonial Revival do not concern us; it is enough to note that at the end of that age which historians have called "Gilded," the post-Civil War generation turned back to its American colonial past as a source for architectural inspiration. The national Colonial Revival brought Californians to a belated appreciation of the architecture of their own colonial past and to the realization, and eventual imitation, of the ruined Franciscan missions and the picturesque houses of the first New England settlers. Because the movement was national in origin, and reached California as part of her immigrant culture, the earliest manifestation was the eastern revivalist phase known as the Shingle type.

The Shingle style was carried to California after the usual ten-year cultural lag by a half dozen brilliant young men who together epitomize the exceptional standards pertaining in the western profession since the gold rush. The first Shingle stylist was Earnest Coxhead, who although only twenty-three when he arrived in 1886 was already a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Three years later Willis Polk and Bernard Maybeck appeared in San Francisco, the latter with the diploma of the Beaux-Arts in his pocket. In 1893 Irving Gill and Charles and Henry Greene came West in search of health: Gill from the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan; the brothers Greene from the school of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a tour of Boston architectural offices. Every one of these men had experienced colonial architecture at first hand, and all were familiar with the Shingle style as developed in the East by Henry Hobson Richardson and Stanford White. Henry Greene worked several years in the Boston firm founded by Richardson; Polk served an apprenticeship in the San Francisco office of A. Page Brown, a former associate of White and himself an accomplished Shingle stylist. Together these men were the most distinguished architects to immigrate to California in two centuries. Ultimately they divided their loyalties equally between the northern and southern parts of the state: Coxhead, Polk, and Maybeck developed a regional version of the Shingle manner that has passed into nomenclature as the San Francisco Bay Tradition. In Pasadena the Greenes progressed from conventional renderings of eastern colonial form to a highly personalized statement that gave its only distinction to the ubiquitous California Bungalow. Finally, in San Diego, Gill discovered in the ruins of Franciscan architecture the inspiration for a brilliant synthesis of the second western phase of the Colonial Revival—the Mission movement.

Like all nineteenth-century offshoots of the Stick style, the Shingle depends upon the principle of opposition and contrast. Coxhead and Polk achieved contradiction by the traditional superimposition of over-scaled

classical forms, such as Georgian door frames and Palladian windows, upon plain surfaces of rough-cut shingle. Bernard Maybeck juxtaposed a much wider historical vocabulary to the redwood vernacular, and did this in a highly personal and expressionistic manner. Maybeck was also exceptional in his romantic—almost medieval—sense of the totality of architecture, and his deep love of materials and profound respect for craftsmanship. More than any other Bay Traditionalist, Maybeck embodied the dramatically self-contradictory characteristics of the Shingle style. Although highly original in his use of the structural and decorative possibilities of materials, he was extremely eclectic, emotional, and unpredictable. His admirers, and they are deservedly many, have responded in kind by calling his work “creative eclecticism.”

The material employed by all of these designers was native redwood, as it had been since the first shingles were cut north of San Francisco Bay in 1833. But the use of an indigenous material does not constitute a style. California redwood differs in composition from eastern fir in perhaps the same manner as her adobe soil differs from that of Mexico. Yet, neither in the case of the Mediterranean masonry nor the American wood traditions did regional building conditions radically alter imported architectural forms. The Bay Traditionalists took an already open plan and adapted it to the more informal pattern of western living; in conforming to regional climatic conditions, they extended an already free flow of space by largely eliminating the distinction between in-doors and out-of-doors. They did this by close planting and interior garden courts, by increasing the areas of glass, and cutting back or opening up sections of the wide eaves traditional to the Stick manner.

The fact there still is a Bay Tradition, despite the profound material and social changes which have transformed San Francisco since the Shingle style was domesticated there more than four generations ago, has led some writers to assume an indigenous architecture. The self-conscious character of the regional work, however, suggests that the Bay Tradition is not so much a response to environmental factors as a continuing restatement of what is now an exhausted and manneristic formula. As has been shown, the Bay Tradition did not deviate importantly either in form or material from the eastern models which directly inspired it. The inhibiting factors in this case are not simply the usual ones endemic to colonial cultures such as that of California. One must consider as well the overriding genius of the eastern masters who developed the style and the pragmatic character of the style itself which seemed at the time to hold infinite possibilities for variation and adaptation. Together these conditions forestalled originality among Shingle stylists everywhere in the United States. It is under such comparative conditions of national imitation that the Bay Tradition assumes its deserved distinction. But whether or not one labels the works of the northern California Shingle stylists Bay Tradition, the fact is that this highly sophisticated build-

ing is largely a provincial ordering of a well-established eastern formula.

The transformation of the eastern Shingle style into a regional vernacular was the work of Southern California building speculators wholly alien to the standards of civility implicit in the Bay Tradition. Their creation, the “California Bungalow,” was the state’s first major suburban vernacular. The bungalow, like everything architectural in California, was imported. The term, an Anglicization of the word “Bengali,” tells the origin in the temporary or seasonal dwellings used by colonial administrators in the British East. The characteristics that account for the bungalow development in India and Ceylon, the maximum circulation of air by means of raised foundations and constant shade derived from wide verandas, along with ease and cheapness of construction, assured its success in California. Exactly when the bungalow first appeared on the West Coast is not as easily determined as is its colonial nature. In 1895 the *American Architect* published an authentic “Indian Bungalow” designed for San Francisco’s peninsula by A. Page Brown, who came to California from the New York office of McKim, Mead and White in the great architectural immigration of the late 1880’s and early 90’s. But this was an isolated example of what was regarded regionally as an exotic building form. It was not until 1903, when Charles and Henry Greene, having finally sloughed off their Queen Anne clichés, designed a redwood house around a patio for Arturo Bandini in Pasadena, that the vernacular took hold. Bandini believed the California bungalow represented a modern version of the dwellings of his Spanish-Mexican forebears; others hold it to be the final phase of the nineteenth-century American wood tradition first domesticated at Monterey by Thomas Oliver Larkin and subsequently vernacularized by successive waves of Yankee immigrants.

The Greene brothers, liked Bernard Maybeck, were masters in the elaboration and personalization of earlier techniques. Indeed, they followed so closely the eastern tradition of picturesque wood construction begun by Andrew Jackson Downing that their work has been called variously Neo-Stick or Western Stick style. Implicit in both these categorizations is the fact that the work of Charles and Henry Greene represents an end—not a beginning—in the long tradition of creative experimentation with wood forms that started in the 1840’s as an American reaction to late-eighteenth century English picturesque classicism. The Greenes’ loose, “unemphatic” planning was a direct outgrowth of the spatial freedom achieved by the early Shingle stylists; their use of materials, even their penchant for Japanese construction and motifs, stemmed directly from ideas generated by the Philadelphia Centennial and, for Californians, reinforced at the Midwinter Fair held in San Francisco in 1894. Although the Greenes created a number of beautiful houses, their work has probably been even more overrated than that of the Bay Traditionalists. Unfortunately, too, their sensitive designs, executed with the finest craftsmanship, were taken over wholesale by bungalow-book writers and contractor-builders and transformed into a shoddy suburban

vernacular. In the first two decades of this century, entire streets, even whole sections of cities, were covered with self-consciously rustic bungalows more marred than charmed by the crude touches of oriental, Art Nouveau, or Arts and Crafts detailing reluctantly allowed by their jerrybuilders.

Earlier it was remarked that the Shingle style was the first architectural manifestation of a national movement of discovery growing out of the Philadelphia Centennial. In their search among the remote villages of New England for an architectural symbolism to match the concurrent literary and historical reinterpretations of American colonial culture, the eastern revivalists found their models in ancient weathered houses whose somber façades were dramatized by carved gables or portals overhung with massive pediments. In the conservative tradition of building, this largely seventeenth-century architecture was crossed with the American Stick style and the English Queen Anne to create the famous Shingle vernacular. As the search for a colonial past continued, designers inevitably revived academic building forms from the late-eighteenth century as well, and these, too, in time, reached California. But this phase of the national Colonial Revival failed to take hold on the West Coast. Its sterile historicity was rightly judged incongruous to the glare, newness, and rush of western living. Anyway, the Californians were uncertainly discovering that they had a past of their own. As one of them put it, "Give me neither Romanesque nor Gothic; much less Italian Renaissance, and least of all English Colonial—this is California—give me Mission."⁶ The regional transformation of the national Colonial Revival into a native movement at the end of the nineteenth century signaled the return of the long banished Mediterranean masonry tradition.

In the opinion of David Gebhard the two Hispanic revivals that dominated California architecture after 1890 should be considered as one movement rather than, as is traditional, separated under the rubrics Mission and Spanish Colonial. Only by giving these Mediterranean offshoots unity of treatment, writes Gebhard, "can [one] understand these seemingly divergent architectural forms . . . as representing a single and coherent statement—an architectural statement which strongly influenced the various *avant garde* movements which [subsequently] developed in California."⁷ There is much to be said for this point of view, particularly if one regards the entire movement as a revival of California's Mediterranean building tradition and not merely a set of stylistic sequences. However, as the Mission and Spanish Colonial phases are distinct, with very little overlapping either in time or personality, it is convenient to continue the traditional labels—bearing in mind that the revival of Mediterranean building forms at the end of the nineteenth century is of importance to us primarily as a regional manifestation of national, or even international, architectural trends.

A long gulf divided the desire of Californians for a colonial past and the discovery of the architectural sources which might give it validity. Six years after the national Colonial Revival was launched in Philadelphia, a

group of Californians, reacting against a century of European and north-eastern American architectural colonialism, issued an appeal for a native style shaped by “its fitness for the purpose for which it is to be erected” and “the locality where it stands.”⁸ But though the San Franciscans celebrated the centennial of the founding of Mission Dolores in the same year that they discovered the New England exhibit at Philadelphia, the Mission Revival was ten years getting under way. The problem was simply that there was very little Spanish-Mexican architecture in California to discover. The gradual evolution of the English Queen Anne style toward an American colonial architecture, which so facilitated the work of the eastern revivalists, had no western counterpart, and the Californians were faced with the fact that, excepting some poor adobe cottages, the only architectural evidence of a Mediterranean past were the isolated ruins of the Franciscan missions. To see in these disintegrating monuments the possibility of a regional revival was the genius of the New Englander, Charles Fletcher Lummis, editor of *Land of Sunshine*, who spoke for the architects as well as the Southern Pacific Railroad when he wrote that the missions “are worth more money, are a greater asset to Southern California, than our oil, our oranges, or even our climate.”⁹

Paradoxically, the Mission Revival as an architectural movement began in Northern California with the Shingle stylist Willis Polk, who in 1887 published a sketch for a “Mission Church of Southern California Type.” It was another Bay Traditionalist, A. Page Brown, who brought the movement to national attention with his design for the California Building at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. By that time a handful of Southern California architects, chief of whom was the propagandist Arthur Benton, had begun to translate Lummis’s philosophy into railroad stations, inns, schoolhouses, and business blocks (but ironically not churches) whose mastic surfaces and cast iron tile roofs mocked rather than imitated the work of the Franciscan builders. As in the case of the Shingle style before it, the Mission craze was taken up by the Craftsman movement and converted into another bungalow vernacular—this time with even more deadly results. What finally killed the movement was boredom. The mission idea was as alien to twentieth-century California as adobe construction was to twentieth-century technology. Without functional or material integrity, the revival fell back upon theatrics and spawned a host of so-called Moorish, Venetian, Islamic, and Hopi sub-styles, each of which, if possible, was more degraded than the other. Irving Gill, who loved the missions for their structural honesty and aesthetic austerity, wrote: “It is safe to say that more architectural crimes have been committed in their name than in any other, unless it be the Grecian temples.”¹⁰ Yet, were it not that Gill had some connection with the movement, this first phase of the attempt to revive Mediterranean building forms in California would be dismissed as an architectural banality.

The Mission Revival was generally rejected by the important designers of the time as an anachronistic source for twentieth-century architecture. An exception was the San Diego designer Irving Gill, who, although not properly a Mission Revivalist, found in the Spanish-Mexican colonial architecture of Southern California the inspiration for a personal version of the international movement known as Rationalism. Like his exact contemporaries, the Greenes of Pasadena, Gill practiced for more than a decade in various orthodox eastern styles before his work showed any important regional influences. Then, around 1907, he began to design structures in the most advanced technology which were also beautifully integrated into the past. As Esther McCoy has written, Gill was "a romanticist whom time has shown to be a realist." This realism, combined with respect for materials learned in an apprenticeship with Louis Sullivan, separated him from the Southern California Mission Revivalists. Whereas they despised technology, Gill used it as a high art—adapting the most advanced methods of cast concrete to structural purposes with the same integrity that he utilized Franciscan forms in design concepts. The famous question as to whether or not Gill's ideas of structure and design derived ultimately from the Viennese purist Adolf Loos is beyond my competence to resolve. However, the controversy is important to us as suggestive, once again, of the international cross-currents always operative in California as a result of continuing cultural colonialism. As an easterner trained in the Midwest with a profound interest in American technology and European stylistic developments, Gill seems to epitomize the California immigrant-architect of the last century. He is conspicuously separated from the historical western profession, however, by reason of his genius. Gill's work may be the best yet done in California. At any rate, it is a hostage against all the failures of the Mediterranean Revival and stands, with that of Bernard Maybeck, as rare testimony to the creative possibilities for architecture inherent in this land and culture.

The Mission movement was California's second response to the national Colonial Revival. But unlike the brilliant success achieved by the Shingle stylists working in eastern architectural forms in San Francisco and Pasadena, the Mission Revivalists failed to create a viable synthesis of past and present. The successor movement, the Spanish Colonial Revival, also originated in an international exposition—this one held in San Diego in 1915 to commemorate the completion of the Panama Canal. The San Diego Exposition was typically an exercise in colonialism. Bertram Goodhue, whose New York office designed most of the buildings, claimed that he secured the commission by reason of his studies of Spanish colonial architecture in Mexico. Faithful to the books of photographs from which he made his own elaborate renderings, Goodhue introduced the Churrigueresque style into California—even though one hundred years earlier the Franciscans had rejected it in favor of Neoclassicism. Outside the exposition grounds, however, Mexican religious architecture proved even more alien to twentieth-

century building requirements than had the California missions. But Goodhue had other books, and from these he selected the Andalusian and Mexican farmhouses which are the real sources of the Spanish Colonial Revival. The fact there was no proper Spanish colonial architecture in California other than the discredited missions was not a problem to the revivalists. As Herbert Croly said, there was a "spiritual similarity" between the Renaissance tradition and the church architecture of the Mediterranean countries; it was the realization of this spirit, he maintained, that motivated the Franciscan builders in California. Such rationalizations aside, the sources of the Spanish Colonial Revival were pictorial plates, and from the year of the San Diego Exposition until 1930, a host of new style pattern books were published to acquaint Southern California designers with what were alleged to be the ambitions of the mission fathers.

For our purposes the most interesting of these sources is architect Richard Requa's *Old World Inspiration for American Architects*, published in 1929. Requa not only gave in his title a terse summation of one hundred and sixty years of California architectural colonialism but conveniently included among his Spanish models a handful from England—the other major European source for western building traditions. Requa also returns us to the chief inspirational occupation of regional designers in the last several centuries: the perusal of architectural publications. The Franciscans who first introduced Mediterranean masonry techniques in California built from plates in Vitruvius; the Stick stylists popularized the American wood tradition through the pattern books of Downing and Cleaveland. Their present-day successors, whether subscribing to the New Brutalism of England and France or the Skidmore, Owens and Merrill syndrome of New York, continue to build in California from pictorial references in professional books and magazines.

To summarize, I have presented the historical facts of the relationship between California architecture and contemporary trends in Europe and America wholly in terms of the immigrant-designers who worked within the Mediterranean masonry and American wood building traditions. This admittedly limited construct presents my interpretation of several hundred years of architectural effort. Although we may differ as to the aesthetic quality of California building in the successive periods of Spanish, Mexican, and American domination, we can, I hope, agree upon its colonial character. Certainly there is more to California architecture—and California culture—than the characteristic of colonialism. An immigrant culture necessarily represents the interaction between imported ideas and the challenge of a new environment. In California, however, the force of environment has been blunted by diversity and a seemingly infinite capacity for accommodation. This, together with a continually accelerating immigration, has resulted in the persistence of colonial forms to a degree hardly matched in the United States. Santayana's observation that the distinct characteristic of immigra-

tion is social radicalism and cultural conservatism truly defines the California architect through almost ten generations. He wanted a new life, yes, but he wanted it in the only setting he could culturally understand—the one he left behind; hence, the one he must reproduce.

If nothing else, my perhaps relentless emphasis upon colonialism has suggested how much remains to be known about every aspect of California architecture other than its national and international antecedents. For example, what are the psychological and social factors which gave the Shingle style its sense of fitness and long ascendancy in the San Francisco Bay region? To what extent does the bungalow reflect the mediocrity of life in Southern California, with its desperate perpetuation upon a booming wasteland of the supposedly rural values of a largely midwestern immigration? How faithfully does architecture reveal the extraordinarily exploitive character of California society? Or its pluralism or mobility or impermanence? Is there a correlation between the make-believe character of much of California building in the last half-century and the unreality of contemporary social and political ideas? In a broader sense we can ask whether or not what we have found in architecture can be extrapolated to the entire range of California culture: to art, literature, music, learning, and so on. The answers to these questions lie in future scholarship, and we can hope that they will be forthcoming. Up until now, however, there has been little opportunity for serious cultural stock-taking; all that we have been able to do is glance at the evidence and wait for the next wave of immigrant culture to break. If my summation of the architectural components of this forever-coming-into-being-culture has been something of a negative catalogue, that does seem to be the nature of California culture.

NOTES

1. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function* (Berkeley, 1962), 52.
2. David Gebhard and Harriette Von Breton, *1868-1968: Architecture in California* (Santa Barbara, 1968), 3.
3. George Kubler, *The Religious Architecture of New Mexico* (Colorado Springs, 1940), 131.
4. Vincent J. Scully, *The Shingle Style* (New Haven, 1955), 1.
5. Charles P. Dwyer, *The Economic Cottage Builder* (Buffalo, 1856), unnumbered page.
6. *Architect and Engineer*, LXXIX (Oct. 1924), 78.
7. David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXVI (May 1967), 132.
8. *California Architect and Building News*, III (Feb. 1882), 29.
9. Quoted in Franklin Dickerson Walker, *A Literary History of Southern California* (Berkeley, 1950), 132.
10. Quoted in Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780* (Cambridge, 1969), 216.
11. Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects* (New York, 1960), 61.