

A History of Canadian Architecture, by Harold Kalman. Volumes 1 and 2. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994. Vol. 1: xi, 478 pp.; Vol. 2: vi, 455 pp. Illus. \$95.00 (set) cloth.

The appearance of Kalman's work is a landmark in the writing of Canadian architectural history, for, despite its limitations, the comprehensive survey of a field does have value, and we have not seen such a thing since Alan Gowans's highly personal *Building Canada* (1966) and Pierre Mayrand and John Bland's *Three Centuries of Architecture in Canada* (1971). Backed by a prestigious board of advisers, Kalman has quarried material from a host of period and modern sources and assembled it into a coherent, readable narrative — no mean feat. Among the work's merits are its abundant illustrations, including line drawings by David Byrnes; but the result is that, despite a publication grant from the Getty Foundation of California, the two-volume set is expensive, and the volumes are not sold separately.

Although no single ordering principle is followed, broadly speaking Kalman takes the Laurentian thesis of historiography as his premise, moving in volume one from east to west, so that readers looking for material on British Columbia find it only in the last chapter (eight) and in volume two. There is a lot of it, and one comes away rather proud of BC's achievements. One senses how hard Kalman has worked to stitch in examples from this province. This is no accident, for he taught for a time in the Fine Arts Department at UBC and now lives and practises as an architectural historian and preservation consultant in Vancouver.

Chapter 8 in the first volume deals with the settlement of the west coast. It begins with a treatment of Native building that is a sound, compact introduction to the subject, then goes on to the colonial and early provincial periods. A mini-narrative of nineteenth-century Victoria — one of many short local histories scattered through the book — is a distillation of Martin Segger's treatment in *Victoria* (1979), of which a new edition will appear shortly. Then, in a section on the interior, the Royal Engineers' activity of surveying forts and town sites and building simple administrative buildings and neo-Gothic churches is traced, along with the jerry-built gold rush towns and the ranches and wayside inns that resulted. But is this architecture, properly speaking? Why not just read an up-to-date history — say Jean Barman's *The West beyond the West* (rev. 1996) — for surely the buildings are merely deduced from their materials and purposes? I would argue that, although (as often in volume 1) considerations of structure, materials, and building-types predominate, it is helpful to see these in the context of architectural aesthetics.

Towards 1900 architecture as such arrived in force in BC in the work of Rattenbury, Hooper, Maclure, and their generation, whom we meet in volume 2, chapters 9 to 11. If the Chateau-Style hotels along the CPR route were projections of Montreal's and London's ideas of the rugged West, BC made quite original contributions in other fields. The provincial Parliament Buildings in Victoria, of 1893-98, by the entrepreneurial whiz-kid Ratten-

bury, just in from Yorkshire, was the first domed legislature in Canada, a form he adapted (adding a Britannic flavour) from American state-legislatures and the buildings of the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Samuel Maclure's houses in Victoria and Vancouver, treated in chapter 11, are among the most original and representative Arts & Crafts and Tudor Revival designs in Canada. These are path-breaking, and in general the importance of BC to the national architectural narrative grows through the twentieth century. In chapter 12, on town planning, several towns in BC appear — Cumberland, Robert Dunsmuir's hellhole for colliers' families on Vancouver Island; Prince Rupert, the Canadian Northern Railway's supposed answer to Vancouver; and Kitimat, a Garden Town laid out by American utopian town-planner Clarence Stein in the early 1950s. Again BC plays a key role in chapter 14, on interwar architecture, in discussions of both traditional, historicizing architecture — Neo-Tudor houses, Collegiate Gothic churches, and the like — and the forward-looking Deco and Moderne family of styles. BC just may be the best place in Canada to see Deco in action.

The province comes fully into its own in chapter 15, "Modernism and Beyond," which begins with a mini-history of Vancouver, Canada's prototypically modern city. Kalman takes the accepted line in architectural studies that International Modernism made its first big splash in Canada on the west coast in the work of pioneering Vancouver firms, was only later taken up in stodgier centres like Toronto — from which it radiated through central Canada — and realized some of its finest achievements on the coast, particularly in the work of Arthur Erickson, who went on to become Canada's first architectural "superstar." Seemingly no part of Canada is as identified with Modernism as is Vancouver, and the work of leading-edge designers here today, such as Patkau Architects and Richard Henriquez, takes meditation on the Modern as its theme. But it is precisely this that leads me to question the chapter's title, for are we in fact "beyond" Modernism? I do not think so. It looked that way ten or fifteen years ago, but since about 1990 a consensus has crystallized around a certain, slightly punk, Neo-Modernism as the dominant style in architecture and design. Classicizing "Post-modernism" is on the wane — though Paul Merrick's Cathedral Place and a miniature clone of it in downtown Victoria, just opened, may make you wonder — and enigmatic, deconstructive New Modernism is the rule. But this is a debate for another forum; what matters here is that BC, its architects, and its architectural school (at UBC) are viewed as leaders in Canadian architectural design and discourse. Anyone who doubts that should visit Moshe Safdie's Library Square in Vancouver, the most controversial complex built in the Lower Mainland for a generation — though its pink concrete "wrapper" articulated in the spirit of the Roman Coliseum may seem to deny what I just said about Postmodernism. The library opened too late to figure in Kalman's history, but it aptly illustrates Vancouver's leadership in Canadian design of the 1990s.