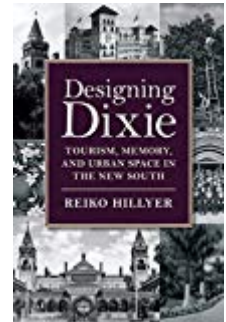


Reiko Hillyer. *Designing Dixie: Tourism, Memory, and Urban Space in the New South.* The American South Series. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014. xi + 266 pp. \$46.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8139-3670-3.



Reviewed by Stephen E. Nepa

Published on H-SAWH (August, 2015)

Commissioned by Lisa A. Francavilla (The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series and Jefferson Quotes & Family Letters)

In *Designing Dixie*, Reiko Hillyer, assistant professor of history at Lewis and Clark College, asserts that to enable national reconciliation after the Civil War, northerners and southerners alike employed “historical amnesia” when rebuilding southern cities between 1865 and 1914. Focusing on the efforts of citizens, boosters, architects, and financiers in St. Augustine, Richmond, and Atlanta, Hillyer posits that tourism, employed in different ways and celebrating certain histories, was “a host for New South propaganda” (p. 43). Building on works analyzing the history and memory of the romantic plantation South, she examines not antebellum gentility but places with “more ambiguous, even evasive relationship[s] to the Confederate past” (p. 5).[1] Echoing the late historian Hal K. Rothman, she claims that by relying on northern capital for rebuilding while using violence and Jim Crow to limit the mobility of blacks, these New South cities made “devil’s bargains” when modernizing after the Civil War and Reconstruction.[2]

Following her introduction and a first chapter that examines northern views of the postwar South, Hillyer devotes one chapter to each city. At the close of the Civil War in 1865, Richmond and Atlanta lay in ruins. Though St. Augustine avoided destruction, Florida itself was still largely rural and contained fierce racial animosities. With the region’s prewar underdevelopment and its scarred landscape afterwards, southern boosters, armed with northern capital and know-how, saw distinct opportunities to industrialize. Northerners, relishing victory but battle-weary, toured the South, marveling at the region’s raw materials and, by the admission of their eager hosts, its cheap, pliant labor force. Yet as Hillyer argues, such business relationships required a sense of forgetting past divisions and a racialized common ground. Mining promotional literature, speeches, and chambers of commerce meeting minutes, she finds that common ground rested on the “Anglo-Saxon stock” and “common language” shared between northern and southern whites (p. 1). South-

ern blacks, struggling for Constitutional freedoms well into the twentieth century, rarely appeared in the day's tourist and/or capitalist development discourse other than as polite, subordinate workers. Hillyer reminds us of Ray Stannard Baker's sharp criticism that northern and southern whites wanted "the New South, but the Old Negro" (p. 146). Further, she refers to the northern capitalization of southern landscapes as "empire building," a term that by the 1880s resonated among promoters and detractors of US foreign policy. Hillyer suggests the postwar South, itself full of subjugated peoples, was the template on which later "civilizing missions"—those that subjugated Cuban, Hawaiian, Filipino, and Panamanian natives—were modeled.[3]

Designing Dixie draws upon primary materials such as news articles, travel guides, speeches, diaries, novels, boosters' pamphlets, as well as secondary texts from various historical subfields, including tourism, architecture, and urban history. For Hillyer, "heritage tourism," the conscious selecting, packaging, and selling of the past to the present, especially to blunt historical trauma, was central to the efforts undertaken in St. Augustine and Richmond. Whitewashing the discomfort over slavery and secession, those cities embraced their Spanish *conquistador* and Jamestown-era pasts, respectively. By doing so, they made associations not with slavery or secession but with nation-building. Atlanta, by contrast, staked no claims to the past and instead, as the southern "offspring of Chicago," imported northern cultural institutions, from opera companies to skyscrapers (p. 135). Hillyer is at her best when examining architecture, the primary medium through which cities expressed their modernity. Taking cues from historians Susan Braden, Phoebe Kropp, and Molly Berger, she positions Henry Flagler's St. Augustine hotels, Richmond's Hotel Jefferson, and Atlanta's Kimball House as not only the cynosure of those cities' rebuilding efforts and bases of northern capitalists' sojourns south, but also as lenses

through which northerners and southerners alike witnessed the New South's progress.[4]

Architecture stood as the most tangible representation of northern influence and southern determination to rebuild. Carpetbagger capitalists such as Henry Flagler used their wealth to design elaborate lodgings the likes of which locals had never seen. Desirous of creating a winter resort at St. Augustine, Flagler's Ponce de Leon, Alcazar, and Cordova hotels, conjuring aspects of Spanish-Mediterranean heritage, lent the sleepy city an aristocratic feel. While management personnel came from northern hotels (so as to guarantee perceptions of professionalism in the eyes of northerners), the black workers who filled custodial and back-of-the-house positions entered and exited the properties through unseen passages.

New South barons, such as Richmond tobacco magnate Lewis Ginter, spared few expenses in trying to place their cities on footings equal to their northern counterparts. Ginter, whose dinner parties were catered by Delmonico's of New York, and other influential citizens felt that Richmond needed a first-class hotel to capture Florida-bound tourists and show potential visitors the city's modern direction. Designed by New York's Carrère and Hastings (renown architects of Flagler's Florida hotels), the Hotel Jefferson, a mix of Beaux-Arts and Mediterranean styles, opened to great fanfare in 1885. Over time, the property itself became a tourist destination and signaled Richmond's post-war emergence from Confederate capital to a modern industrial city. A statue of Thomas Jefferson, placed amidst the Palm Court's tropical foliage, "removed him from purely local associations and surrounded him with the trappings of consumerism" (p. 124). By contrast, a statue of Robert E. Lee, erected in 1890, stood alone in an overgrown field outside the city limits, revealing that Richmond still grappled with its Confederate past a generation after the war (p. 130).

But Atlanta, having witnessed the most destruction during the war, was almost entirely re-

built from scratch. Unlike St. Augustine and Richmond, which “dressed themselves in colonial costume,” Atlanta embraced “northern-style bustle, cosmopolitanism, and modernity,” with boosters claiming citizens were too preoccupied with money to dwell on the past, a trope that influenced the city’s civil rights-era “too busy to hate” slogan (p. 135). Not only did the city contain a half-dozen luxury hotels by the 1890s, but by 1910 it also contained several skyscrapers similar to those in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

Hillyer demonstrates how urban space was shaped, maintained, and contested along lines of race and class. Beyond workplace segregation, wealthy and/or white neighborhoods received municipal services while black neighborhoods agitated for street paving, electrification, and transit lines. Hillyer notes that spatial segregation, particularly in Richmond and Atlanta, was fashioned by the elites of those cities to assuage northerners’ xenophobic and racial fears. Yet she points out that many southerners, especially women who were left out of business and politics, believed that too much northern reconciliationist influence denied the South its own cultural sovereignty. More importantly, as eager as southern boosters were to northernize, they were never willing to abandon their tradition of white supremacy.

Historians Max Page and Dell Upton explain that the physical landscapes of cities embody the collective memories and desires of their creators. [5] Hillyer makes a similar case for these New South cities, in that those memories were tainted by amnesiac avoidances of the immediate past and fanciful celebrations of the distant past. As for the desires of the boosters of those cities and their northern counterparts, Hillyer claims that reconciliation, thinly veiled by capitalist investment, industrial growth, and modern amenities, was driven by profit motive. As W. E. B. Du Bois remarked of Atlanta in 1903, “these new captains of industry neither love nor hate ... it is a cold question of dollars and dividends.”[6] The under-

side to such growth was the New South’s institutional racism, employed to minimize northerners’ fears about labor unrest and southern backwardness.

Designing Dixie stands as an ambitious, worthy contribution to urban history, business history, southern history, the history of tourism, and understandings of historical memory. Complementing her accessible prose, Hillyer makes fine use of illustrations, photographs, and promotional materials showing many of the sites and spaces that defined the postwar resurgence of these cities. Well researched and convincingly argued, *Designing Dixie* will be of immediate interest to students and scholars alike.

Notes

[1]. Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[2]. Hal K. Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

[3]. Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African-American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[4]. Susan R. Braden, *The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); and Molly W. Berger, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America, 1829-1929* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[5]. Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[6]. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 113.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-sawh>

Citation: Stephen E. Nepa. Review of Hillyer, Reiko. *Designing Dixie: Tourism, Memory, and Urban Space in the New South*. H-SAWH, H-Net Reviews. August, 2015.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=44022>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.