

## **REVELATIONS, PREDICAMENTS & CIVIC DESIGN: The Americanization of the British Urban Environment, c.1900-14**

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By the end of the nineteenth century the functional and aesthetic failings of the large-sized industrial city had been recognized not only in Britain but in also in other countries, like the United States of America and Germany. In the United States (US), for instance, the City Beautiful Movement from the early-1890s until the 1920s sought to create modern beauty in the urban environment frequently through the use of architectural principles like proportion, symmetry and scale in large-sized Classically-styled buildings and civic center schemes. Many renowned British architects and urban planners, including Thomas Mawson, commented upon urban developments in America before 1914 in admiring terms. Many admired the fact that US matters had proceeded from the 1890s on a settled policy, with designs and methods systematized from the very outset. Central to the US course from the 1890s was the City Beautiful Movement whose existence marked an important stage in the development of landscape architecture, municipal improvement and civic design in modern American history. Importantly as well the City Beautiful was to profoundly affect British urban development, particularly in London and large-sized provincial cities such as Liverpool, with the formation of the Pierhead district before 1914. However the greatest American influence was felt in Cardiff, Wales, as well as Bolton and Dundee, the site for arguably Britain's most rousing pre-1914 American-style urban design proposal. Hence as this paper shows, Britain and to some extent its colonies, before 1914, were subject to an Americanized route of urban development.

### ***Background***

Any appraisal of the development British urban environment circa 1900 to 1914 within the largest cities of that era can ill afford to overlook the impact of the City Beautiful Movement, a reformist group borne out of the Columbian World's Fair, held in Chicago, USA, from May to October 1893. Described as a triumph of Beaux Arts Classicism this event unveiled to America and the Western World a lively interest in monumental architecture along with the obvious virtues of undertaking comprehensive urban planning. With its white buildings, decorated in similar fashion to each other and of a similar design style, the World's Fair, placed in the contemporary context of urban sprawl, unrest and blight, appeared as somewhat utopian or, as Garvin (2002) in *The American Way* put it, it

displayed the virtue that “One new municipal palace is good; more is better” [Garvin: 80]. In urban betterment terms, of which civic design must be included, the event’s effect was powerful and while the exposition may not explicitly have acted as a model, as a minimum it provided a reference point based on the coherent design of the environment for those interested in improving urban conditions in the US and elsewhere at that time, e.g. Britain.

Despite its temporary existence the World’s Fair provided immediate inspiration for civic improvement and beautification, and generated a new-found sense of social confidence in architecture and the architect. Its success assured that its design and planning principles, based largely on the grouping of buildings, not only firmed up existing aesthetic and planning knowledge but could be applied to real as opposed to temporary built forms, although in reality in the following years it was only applied directly to the design of civic centers, the symbolic heart of the city, university campuses and expositions. Nonetheless with public buildings to be erected close to each other, in so doing forming ensembles, local governments could thus benefit from the economy, efficiency and symbolic representations of constructing civic centers.

For many advocates of the City Beautiful approach, architecture and large-scale planning were not merely used to elevate the visual standards of modern American cities but additionally provided a means to elevate the sense of citizenship, as large-scale architectural design of a particular manner apparently offered a symbolic language which gave benign assistance, it was believed, to the betterment of society. The idiom used within modern civic centers was usually the Beaux Arts Classical style, a style which was perceived to bring about social order, calmness and propriety into urban environments. Furthermore the style was highly flexible both in terms of design details and the size and function of the structure to which it could be applied, as Tunnard (1953) has highlighted, an important matter due to the emergence of new building types such as railway stations and high-rise offices. The adoption of the style furthermore brought to a conclusion America’s search at the end of the nineteenth century for an effective and socially expressive building style.

When considering questions of an Americanizing of the urban environment, or put another way the comparative evolution of the US and British urban environment and the role of the City Beautiful Movement, the chronological context itself has to be perceived as significant since, firstly, by that time many governments (at all levels, i.e. municipal, county and national) were growing in size and so needed additional office spaces, and secondly many existing public edifices were obsolete for the needs and demands of modern urban governance. Moreover, in spatial terms they were often scattered throughout the local settlement and as noted previously, this made governments less efficient. Consequently the early City Beautiful Movement endorsed major urban components such as expositions and civic centers, for after all these were far easier to achieve when compared to directly influencing the private property sector or designing entire city plans. Thus the World’s Fair and subsequent expositions, like those at Buffalo, St. Louis and San Francisco at the turn of

the twentieth century, demonstrated qualities in urban design and planning, qualities that could be passed onto governments in their architectural practices. These merits included the advantages of an ordered arrangement of buildings, the value of focal points and vistas, the significance of unity by colour, the effect of scale, and the need for stylistic homogeneity—traits missing within the industrial urban environment that had developed throughout the 1800s. Thus by promoting concepts such as unity, proportion, symmetry and harmony through similarities in height, bulk, colour, material and treatment of the main elevations, grand civic ensembles could be produced, which not only emphasized the overall design composition but also the relation between the structure with its surroundings. In such a way the City Beautiful movement judged the concept of urban beauty as being an entity which on the one hand encouraged individual artistic ingenuity yet, on the other hand, significantly, promoted a Classical architectural framework in order to bestow somewhat idealized aesthetic and social notions in order to improve the state of urban society. Such a view of design, and therefore social development, filtered overseas into Britain by the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “in a well-organized city individual expression is subordinate to the civic expression of the city as a whole”, stated Stanley Adhsead, an academic at Liverpool University, in the *Town Planning Review* [Adshhead: 3]. A very City Beautiful view indeed.

### *The City Beautiful Impact*

The impact of the City Beautiful Movement from the early-1890s onwards was significant in the US and elsewhere, helping establish an Americanization of modern urban environments within the Western (industrialized) World. In Canada, just as in the US itself, the movement had some form of impact that ranged from the construction of new, large-scale Classically formed public and quasi-public edifices, such as City Halls, Public Libraries and Rail Stations, through to parks and smaller-sized projects such as street seating, fountains and ornamentation, and street lighting. Canada, during the period considered by this paper, was a nation with colonial ties to Britain and thus was subject to influential British administrative, military or artistic contexts, yet the growing impact of architectural and city planning developments in the US still emerged before 1914. This not only included the popular City Beautiful Movement but also the use of Classical Revival Styles, like the Romanesque by outstanding US designers such as Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886). Such a stylistic influence may be seen in the compositions of the Ontario Legislative Building (by Richard Waite, 1886, with later additions by E.J. Lennox and George Gouinlock) and City Hall (by E.J. Lennox, 1889-9) in Toronto, which bore a close resemblance to Richardson’s Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1883-6), and the 1915 plan for Ottawa-Hull by Edward Bennett, an associate of US City Beautiful Movement figurehead Daniel Burnham. However, as Canada was influenced by both British and US influences in some urban development projects both British and American influences can be seen. By way of example, one of the utmost

British civic planning proposals in Canada was Thomas Mawson's 1913 Plan for Calgary (proposed yet unbuilt), a unique civic design proposal in British-controlled North America. The general form of Mawson's Beaux-Arts style Plan for Calgary, i.e. City Beautiful-based project, consisted of a number of major axes that consisted of a network of boulevards distributed throughout the urban form. Utilizing in some parts of the plan the local topography, particularly the meandering form of the local rivers, Mawson also incorporated numerous geometric district plans that included roads shaped in semi-circular patterns and grand Baroque-style perspectives along straight, broad thoroughfares. However, as non-Canadian-inspired as much of Calgary's plan was, for the British architect's inspiration came directly from the US and was not based on his understanding of the local context—since Mawson never visited Canada in the process of creating the scheme—it was still nonetheless somewhat Canadian in character due, for instance, to the grid plan that could be seen throughout Mawson's scheme—a feature typical of urban settlements built on the western railway of Canada. Yet, as noted before, the scheme also possessed a contemporary US flavor. Roads, along with urban spaces which focused towards the local rivers, were fundamental elements in the City Beautiful-esque proposal and the centerpiece of Mawson's plan was to be the ambitious civic center located in proximity to a local waterway.

To refer back to the British and US contexts the City Beautiful Movement's existence coincided with a major time of political growth. In Britain political change, like that in America, brought a new civic status by the 1890s and maybe additional civic pretension too to settlements affected by such governmental changes. If the passing of the Local Government Act (1888) in England and Wales is taken as an example it not only created 60 or so new county councils or affected the political governance of provincial places but also had influence in London, which had its numerous vestries replaced by a single governmental organisation, the London County Council (formed in 1889). Urban places in Britain with a population in excess of 50,000 persons after the Local Government Act of 1888 became borough councils and were able in governmental terms to act independently of their county. However, the passing of the Local Government Act and its association with new possibilities of civic design, as expressions of new-found political status, must not be viewed in isolation but also in an evolving domestic cultural situation, for example, with a new-found sense of appreciation towards the monarch, Queen Victoria (ruler from 1837-1901).

By the 1880s Queen Victoria was continuing to live a life withdrawn from the public's view following the death of the Prince Consort, her husband, in December 1861 from typhoid. However by 1887 not only was a new sense of energy exerted into the public life of the Queen but also a new feeling of exuberance and vitality was injected into British urban life thanks to the huge celebrations which took place nationally to commemorate the golden anniversary of the Queen's reign. In London this new spirit was to leave an indelible mark upon the metropolis's urban form thanks to the architectural and metropolitan achievements that it inspired. In the provinces this attitude was also felt, an outcome of the growing nationalistic mood which was borne out of the perceived economic, political and military importance of Britain at that time as a consequence of the empire. This

feeling, closely allied to colonial developments, was also to filter through and be resonated in the urban policies and actions of many local governments and thus must be perceived to be a significant element that affected the morphological and aesthetic form of British urban places in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. Thus its influence had more affect in London than elsewhere, which is somewhat to be expected due to its perception as center of the nation and empire and ultimately this perception became expressed in the composing of American-style architectural and planning schemes, as described later. By way of example, during the later years of the nineteenth century when nationalism was reaching new heights, and the notion of civic pride was seen at certain times to be connected with the rise of nationalism as a consequence of royal spectacles of national importance, it was no coincidence that numerous civic developments occurred within the practice of public architecture in Britain, and that the number of civic art projects, which in their smallest form might consist of the erection of statues, increased both in Britain and in the colonies (particularly after Queen Victoria's death in 1901).

#### *An Americanizing Process: The City Beautiful Comes to London*

In 1901 following the death of Queen Victoria the opportunity to bring about a dramatic architectural and scenic change to London was utilized through the Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme, carried out by architect Aston Webb who dealt with all the design and planning elements of the scheme. Like the London County Council's Kingsway-Aldwych scheme, a Parisian-style boulevard laid down at about the same time, the memorial project provided London with another triumphal way and bore similarities with contemporary large-scale American designing of the type propagated by the City Beautiful Movement. The scheme, like the aforementioned Kingsway-Aldwych project, represented a major attempt to endow the metropolis with a sense of monumental status and style. The resultant Mall, the roadway and vista running directly towards Thomas Brock's Victoria Memorial Statue in front of Buckingham Palace, Admiralty Arch and the refacing of Buckingham Palace, were crucial elements in the grand design of imperial London, providing the city with a monumentality which satisfied the metropolis's imperial destiny. This scheme, along with other schemes and planning and architectural developments that took place about that time, must be understood to signify a conscious attempt by public authority to establish London as an artistic creation, an object that was determined not only to give aesthetic pleasure but to also contain society's values and thoughts.

For all their problems Victorian Cities were a great source of pride, receiving architectural attention in terms of both their core, as edifices like Town Halls showed, and the periphery via suburban mansions. The construction of a grandiose public building could not only highlight the presence of local democracy but furthermore civic pride and pretension. The erection of a Town Hall, for example, was often a significant event in the life of a provincial community and sometimes represented the strongest element

in its visual development. Furthermore such a building symbolized and celebrated the vigor and spirit of the settlement.

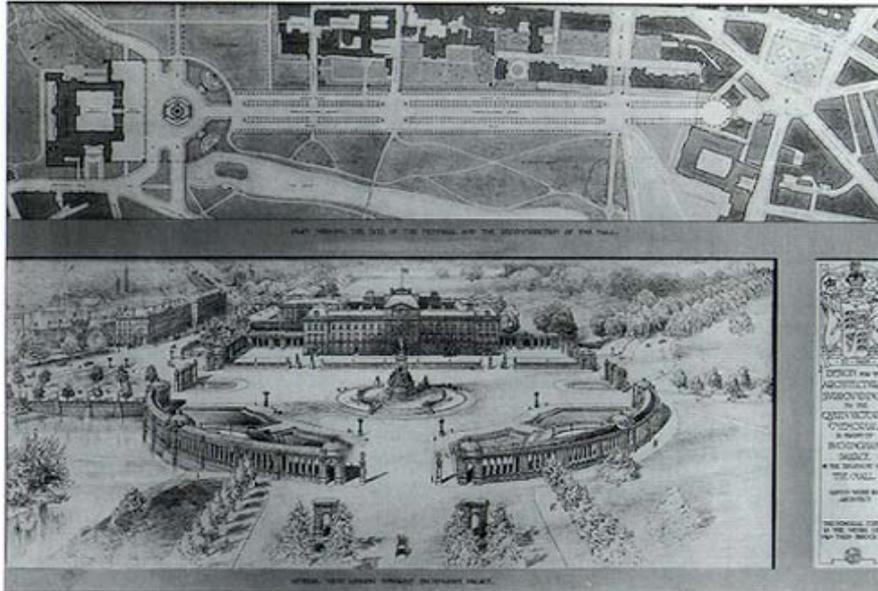


Figure 1. Aston Webb's winning design for the Queen Victoria Memorial Competition (1901). As part of this scheme Webb was to later include the building of Admiralty Arch and the refacing of Buckingham Palace. Source: *The Builder*, 1901.

As demonstrated in cities like Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds, Bradford and Manchester, to acquire a large, grandiose Town Hall, the most dominant and important of all Victorian buildings in a settlement, was an important symbol of status, reflecting not only local cultural and artistic aspirations but also wealth. In the undertaking of a Town Hall the design was crucial to its perceived success. The building not only had to be erected to a large scale but had to be composed in a manner relative to its importance, and this is to be explained now in terms of the civic development of Cardiff.

Throughout the nineteenth century Cardiff, a coal-exporting port in South Wales, had experienced a dramatic increase in its population size and also importance, and the significance of the place was shown by it becoming the capital of Wales at the start of the twentieth century. However the architectural development of Cardiff from the late-1890s was as dramatic as its demographic growth of more than 8,500% between 1801 and 1901, with the erection of a City Hall, Law Courts, County Hall, University and National Museum grouped in close proximity revealing a fine grasp of the principles of civic design, employed to indicate the flourishing importance of the newly formed Welsh capital. Although the siting of the new public buildings at Cardiff was largely determined by the layout of the roads in the Cathays park area of the settlement, the buildings were nonetheless laid out in a grand manner between the broad roadways and in so doing presenting Cardiff with a civic center that adequately responded to functional and

aesthetic requirements. Moreover the nature and quality of Cardiff's civic center was exceptional in the British provincial context, and in terms of its importance to the development of civic design in Britain, Cardiff must rank alongside anything undertaken in London, including the US-inspired Queen Victoria Memorial and Parisian-styled Kingsway-Aldwych schemes.

### *An Americanizing Process: The City Beautiful Comes to Provincial England*

In 1911 Thomas Mawson, a landscape architecture lecturer at the City-Beautiful-influenced School of Civic Design, Liverpool University, devised a major redevelopment scheme for central Bolton, one of the first projects for remodeling a large-sized town in Britain, based upon formal planning lines which would have dramatically altered the form and civic design of Bolton had it been implemented. The plan for Bolton, a comprehensive attempt at modern civic planning, was huge in scale and was to modify an area of land measuring over 2,000 yards in length and almost 700 yards in breadth, a site that included the whole of the central core of the town (population circa 250,000 in 1911).

Within the existing central form of Bolton, Mawson identified three features of particular merit, these being the Town Hall and Town Hall Square, St Peter's Church and Queen's Park, that is the governmental, ecclesiastical and recreational spaces of Bolton, but due to the widespread siting across the center of the town, and so their isolation from each other, Mawson's proposed to bring them all together, thus forming one municipal heart sustaining the life of the whole settlement. Indeed the scale and nature of Mawson's Bolton project was very much guided by symmetrical planned lines and may be seen as further highlighting the influence of the American City Beautiful movement in British architectural and planning circles during the Edwardian period, for Mawson's scheme bore many of the features evident in large-sized schemes in contemporary America, such as establishing a sense of connection between buildings in the central cores of towns and cities. In America this was commonly brought about by the use of wide and direct roadways, with public spaces often laid out in front of public buildings such as the City Hall, Opera House and Central Rail Station.

At Bolton the pragmatic Mawson utilized the dispersed situation of existing public buildings and open spaces within the urban form to formulate a grand manner type plan, a scheme which was to consist of two huge roadways, Church Avenue and Crescent Road, which ran to the center of the front and rear elevations of the Town Hall. This use of thoroughfares of a broad width and direct form, a clear influence of contemporary American planning practices in Britain, was based upon models of urban planning originally issued by Georges Eugène Haussmann during the redevelopment of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s. Thus the Americanization of the environment was in fact based on a Europeanization. Whereas Haussmann created boulevards for, amongst other things, social control and traffic circulation purposes, Mawson employed them as in America from the

1890s in a more architectural/aesthetic manner so as to assist in the process of allowing the isolated public buildings in the town center of Bolton to form a connected arrangement in their own right. The approaches to the Town Hall being significant not only because they would help show the building to its best advantage but because the Town Hall was the dominant architectural piece in Bolton.

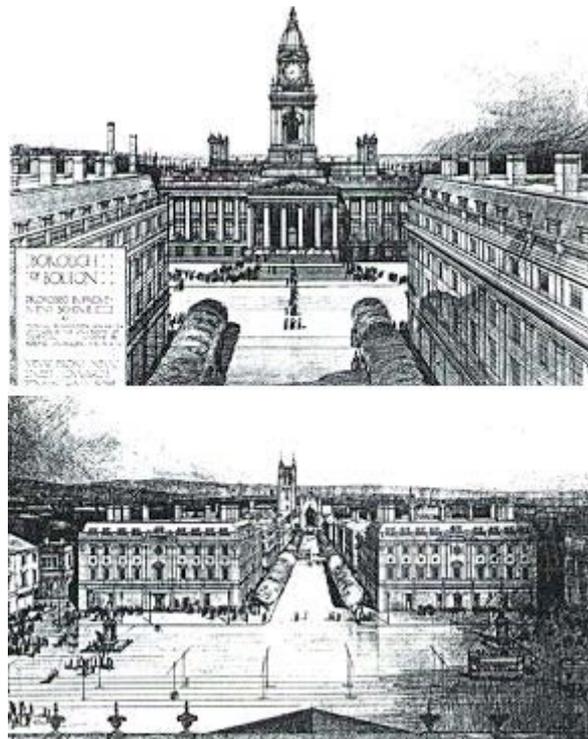


Figure 2. Perspectives from Mawson's plan for Bolton (1911) showing the use of vistas to and from the center of the Town Hall's front elevation. The bottom view is from the base of the building's clock tower looking towards St Peter's Church. *Source:* Mawson, 1911.

Vistas in Mawson's Bolton redevelopment scheme, like those in City Beautiful America where the Beaux-Arts style of design and planning was also of influence, tended to be monumental in character and approached the town's most significant architectural elements, such as Bolton's public buildings or statuary, along major roadways as already noted. A typical example of a vista proposed by Mawson was along Church Avenue, which linked the Town Hall with St Peter's Church through a direct line of sight, the central axis of which directly aligned with the center of the Town Hall's principal facade. Thus any view or alignment established in the built environment in front of the building, such as Church Avenue or Park Crescent at the rear elevation of the Town Hall, was allowed to continue inside the Town Hall's composition given the arrangement of internal spaces within the edifice. The importance of this in terms of civic design cannot be

taken too lightly and was without a doubt used sparingly in suggested schemes but was in fact rare in practice, at least in Britain.

*An Americanizing Process: The City Beautiful Comes to Wales*

In 1897 Cardiff was described as being a place with a very straggling and irregular urban form. However by 1914 there occurred the growth of a well-defined civic district and such was the strength of the Corporation's civic development scheme that an exceptional, grandiose example of civic design was produced. For the period considered by this study the Cathays Park district was unsurpassed and thanks to its monumental display of large neo-Classical buildings this was the nearest that Britain came to producing a scheme such as those manifested under the City Beautiful banner in contemporary America before the onset of World War One in 1914. In this section of this work a brief description of the Cathays Park district shall be given.

The story of the development of Cathays Park begins in 1892 when Lord Bute, a local landowning aristocrat, was officially approached for the first time by the Corporation regarding the possibility of selling a large area of land for the purpose of accommodating a number of public buildings. A provisional agreement though was not reached between Bute and the Corporation until early 1897 when the Corporation agreed to pay £161,000 for 59 acres of land and agreed to certain conditions of development. Bute, for example, stipulated that the land was for public use only and that elm trees existing in the area had to be preserved—a factor influential in the subsequent layout of the roads and the disposition of the civic buildings erected. Additionally, so as to ensure that the sense of spaciousness was retained in the Park the minimum width of all future roadways to be set out was set at 50 feet while the main approach to the area from the town center, Kingsway, was given a width of 90 feet. While it is easy at this point to diminish the significance of the Cathays Park site and Bute's landowning regulations they were vital components in the subsequent development of Cardiff's civic center. In particular Bute's dictates influenced the nature of the district and accordingly new public buildings were erected in unencumbered positions at some distance from each other. In other words, Bute was fundamental in establishing an environment that would provide the ideal setting for buildings representative of Cardiff's new-found position and importance (described subsequently). To rearticulate, Bute was instrumental in establishing what can be seen to be reminiscent of the large-scale civic design schemes constructed overseas at that time, i.e. in America. Thomas Mawson emphasized that the end result and the site were spectacular for Cardiff as it provided Edwardian Britain with a diminutive Washington D.C. In Mawson's words Cathays Park was: "Unquestionably the finest example of forethought, enterprise and the grasp of the underlying principles which make for civic art" [Mawson: 42].



Figure 3. The main elevation of the City Hall and (bottom) the Law Courts, Cathays Park, Cardiff.



The City Hall and Law Courts scheme, the first building scheme undertaken in Cathays Park, and designed by the London-based partnership of Henry Lanchester, Edwin Rickards and James Stewart, has widely been recognized as constituting a highly successful example of civic design due to both the large number of architectural and planning elements that were synthesized together *and* the collective effect of associating each building with the other in a convincing manner—a matchless act in civic designing in Britain. Means employed by Lanchester, Rickards and Stewart to bring the City Hall and Law Courts into harmony, a superlative act of civic art, included the use of the same design style (Baroque—a style of British national symbolism at the end of the nineteenth century), building material (Portland Stone) as well as the same building line for the southern elevations, the employment of rustication at the center and ends of each building, the similar heights of each building, the use of semi-arched windows for the raised ground floor levels and, significantly, the aligning of two of the buildings' axes established within their internal arrangements and the use of the same building line for the south-facing elevations. As a consequence of these factors and others, a sense of association between the City hall and Law Courts was achieved, the sense of harmony being

perceived as a idealized element of contemporary US and British civic design, a means to not only beautify but socially raise a society. As a result it can be said that this Cardiff scheme helped the new Welsh capital punch above its population size and resource level and helped pre-1914 Cardiff form a unique civic center in Britain that was in later years enhanced by further municipal activity and the erection of further municipal buildings, including the University College of Wales, National Museum of Wales and Glamorgan County Hall.

As already emphasized the role of the Cathays Park site should not be overlooked in any chronicle of the Americanization of a Welsh urban environment. The choice of Cathays Park for development by the Corporation, a huge site that offered Lanchester, Rickards and Stewart, and then in later years other architects no restriction of space, offered an almost unrivalled opportunity for grandiose architectural and planning schemes in Britain during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. The openness of the site afforded the possibility of a grand manner layout which the architects utilized and in so doing established a British City Beautiful type scheme was undertaken. Additionally the choice of the Baroque-inspired design and wholesale use of symmetrical planning lines allowed Cardiff to symbolically show off its civic status that had so rapidly grown, like its population level, in the later decades of the nineteenth century and thus validate its claim to city and Welsh capital status by the early years of the twentieth century.

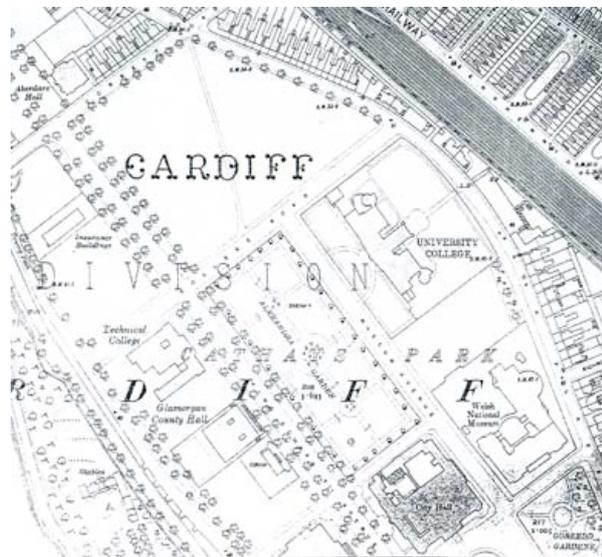


Figure 4. A map of Cathays Park, Cardiff, showing the location of the district's numerous civic edifices (source: Ordnance Survey, 1920). The civic center by circa 1914 was unique in Britain due to its Americanized style and the amount of buildings placed in proximity to each other.

*An Americanizing Process: The City Beautiful Comes to Scotland*

In 1913 James Thomson, Dundee's City Architect at that time, proposed plans for the redevelopment of central Dundee, a scheme very much in contrast to the small-scale civic work that was being practiced in the settlement then. On a site to the west of the city center, on land reclaimed from the dock lands, Thomson planned to erect a rail station, a host of municipal buildings, formally laid-out garden spaces, avenues lined with trees and formal approaches to the proposed buildings. The *Town Planning Review* described Thomson's project as being interesting and important. Such was the scale and ostentation, though, of the suggested project that it can also be argued that the scheme verged upon civic design megalomania and no scheme in Britain during the period considered either proposed or built in the provinces could be compared with its grandiose nature and large size. In 1914 the Corporation accepted Thomson's scheme although it was stopped later that year due to the onset of World War One. Nevertheless a brief description of James Thomson's plan is necessary and had the scheme been laid down in the manner intended by Thomson Dundee would have been given a monumental civic design scheme on a par with those undertaken in the largest cities of contemporary America. Instead, when the idea of the scheme was reborn in 1918 following the end of the Great War it was greatly revised but the implementation of the amended scheme along with other projects, albeit of a more minor scale, led to Dundee quickly assuming a reputation in the immediate post war era as being a progressive settlement with a local government of a broad minded nature.

The total spatial area of Thomson's original scheme was approximately 85 acres, a substantial tract of central urban land. The overall scheme consisted of eight distinct elements which included the removal of many unsanitary properties close to the area of redevelopment, and the building of a new bridge across the Tay. Reclaimed land from the Tay Estuary was to be laid out formally in a manner which Thomson described as a pleasure ground and wide esplanade. The primary architectural structures in the plan, the rail station and municipal buildings, were to be designed in a Classical fashion by James Thomson himself.



Figure 5. Thomson's Dundee Improvement Plan (from *Town Planning Review*, 1913).

Thomson's plan for Dundee was guided by the employment of symmetrical planning lines on a large scale and the use of vistas to create grand visual effects. Surrounded by water on three sides of the reclaimed site, the civic buildings were placed together by Thomson at the eastern end of the land close to Earl Grey Dock so as to form a group. Although Thomson gave no detailed perspective sketches of his buildings, or detailed plans of the buildings either, he did produce a number of pictures showing the anticipated completed form of the civic district. The most prominent of the buildings was a Municipal Office designed in a highly symmetrical form with a plan of a rectangular shape marked at its center by a huge dome in the style of St Paul's Cathedral, London. Statues were to be placed in front of the building in prominent locations like at the center of the end sections and center of the building.

The Classically composed Municipal Office, the most prominent public building in the project, was to be decorated by a large number of paired columns. To the west of the central point of this structure Thomson placed the center of the rail station's main elevation and to the east he placed a statue. Located nearby were additional municipal buildings which were also composed and arranged in a symmetrical manner. To the south of the main civic building the central line of axis through the building was continued towards the waterfront and was terminated by another statue. Around this particular statue Thomson designed a garden area with a formal plan with alignments also terminated by statues. A large rotunda was erected in this section of the reclaimed land as well and the large axis from the center of the Municipal Office was continued across the reclaimed area for many hundreds of yards and was terminated by a huge fountain placed near to the banks of the Tay Estuary. A footpath from the fountain led west towards a new bridge which spanned the Tay Estuary and so connected outlying districts with the new American-fashioned urban core.



Figure 6. Perspectives of Thomson's plan for Central Dundee (source: Dundee City Archives, GM 251 TC/MP37/6).

### *Conclusion*

In North America and Europe in the period between about 1880 and 1914 significant developments were made in civic design practice and the appearance of towns and cities. The period circa 1880-1914 also, as noted, coincided with political developments and as a result many civic schemes that were undertaken were done so not only as a means to provide more buildings due to a need for additional office space, or to improve the efficiency of a government by having public buildings situated in proximity to each other, but also as a way to foster civic pride and assert the rising status of the settlement. In the US urban improvement was to be achieved from the 1890s through aesthetic and planned means. In addition the US provided practical possibilities that could be patronized by local governments, and in many instances they were in Britain.

In terms of US urban betterment from the 1890s the City Beautiful Movement was responsible for altering the appearance and plan of the central cores of many cities. Like all successful movements the City Beautiful Movement had its propagandists, e.g. Daniel Burnham, who were active in terms of both practice and enlarging the theory of civic art and design, and who, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were able to provide a platform for formerly independent individuals and groups, in so doing providing a uniting stage for professional designers and artists interested in civic reform. Inspired by the success of the Columbian World's Fair (1893) the City Beautiful Movement played a powerful role in the evolution of US civic design and as shown by this work it played an influential role in Britain at a time of great cultural and social transition. Like America, Britain too had its very own design and planning protagonists in places such as Cardiff, Dundee, Bolton and London.

Providing a systemized approach to urban betterment, US developments demonstrated the benefits of planned towns and cities as characterized by uniformly-colored Classical edifices and by broad, tree-lined avenues—something of dissimilarity when compared to the dirty, aesthetic poverty-filled townscapes of urban Britain. Significantly too, US plans, given their aesthetic and socially idealized natures expressed a clear desire to be considered as artistic creations despite being composed in a time of rapid urbanization, showed themselves to be successful in improving the visual character of urban environments in the US, and such success was persuasive to British places (and British colonies) given the aforementioned context of dirt and deprivation. As remarked upon earlier the suggested plan offered by Mawson for Calgary would have fitted without any particular problem into the unfolding US urban and civic design context, such as its US inspired form. Under Mawson's plan Calgary was to have embarked on a clearly defined public-led vision of urban development, an Americanized means to create a 'new' city that was to be different from what the 'old' city really was, and a city of unparalleled US visual and morphological form in Canada.

Concerning the Americanization of urban environments before 1914 Canada, just like Britain, was subject to much US influence, and central to

this process was the much-mentioned Thomas Mawson, the proponent of an American scheme in industrial Britain (in Bolton) as well as Canada. Within pre-1914 Canada, Mawson's civic designing was not just limited to working in Calgary as he was also actively involved in projects like the Grand Parade in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Victoria Park in Regina. In Regina, located in the Saskatchewan region of central Canada, Mawson drew up another City-Beautiful-inspired scheme. The center-piece of Mawson's plan for Regina was an existing civic building, the Beaux-Arts style Saskatchewan Legislative Building (1908-12 by E. and W.S. Maxwell) and its grounds (designed by Frederick Todd and the Maxwell Brothers), which thus superficially at least bore similarity to the proposal for Bolton, England, which also used an existing public edifice, the Town Hall, as its visual and societal crux.

As the center of imperial developments, London, a city discussed within the context of this work, had a resonance across the British Empire. Using the British industrial city as a prototype, colonial settlements circa 1900-14 built urban cores with distinguished civic edifices that were often more than modest in scale and represented fashionable design expressions to display local pretensions and instruments of civic pride. But, significantly, the beauty of the city across the British Empire just as it was in provincial Britain, was not a means to itself. The city also had to be clean and healthy; plus, importantly, it had to be a container of colonial power and therefore be subject to aspects of social control. In other words it had to conform to the US City Beautiful concept put forward by Charles Mulford Robinson: *beautility*, i.e. be beautiful, sanitary and functional. Whilst in some places, aspects of indigenous culture influenced the British and their urban design processes, e.g. in India and the Malay Peninsula (in Kuala Lumpur), in other overseas domains the influence of contemporary US progress could be noted, which as already shown, was most explicit within the bounds of Canada. British activity in Canada was, as this paper has revealed, very much based on activities within large US cities.

To conclude, this paper has stressed the Americanization of the British urban environment. So what essentially did this Americanization consist of? In many respects the Americanization of the British environment was a reinvention of prior European traditions such as the Classical, Baroque and Beaux Arts. Guided by the example of, for instance, redevelopments within mid-1800s Paris under the civil service of Georges Haussmann the Americans established new symbols of urban development based on a unique intertwining of functionality and beauty. Strictly set out as the use of Classicism US beauty quickly found favor within environments in Britain and some of its colonies against the backdrop of the dirty industrial environment and the failure of domestic policies to grant urban betterment for all. Utilizing the spatial aesthetic at the end of the 1800s, large-scale Classical architectural design and planning schemes apparently offered a symbolic language which gave benign assistance, it was believed, to the betterment of society. Betterment as a social concept was thus inseparable from the growing consciousness of architectural contexts. In short, Americanization if it is to be defined, consisted of a tangible design and spatial model that was applicable to many environmental contexts within Britain and although the model did not have the same political value in the

UK as it did in the US, it nonetheless possessed an ability to tap into British cultural mores. As has been showed, the greatest British demonstration came in Cardiff, although other proposals for industrial cities like Bolton and Dundee demonstrated the credible character of the City Beautiful. As highlighted, in the colonial context too, the American environment held sway, with possibly the greatest US environment on non-US soil coming in Australia, in Canberra to be precise, just after it gained its independence from Britain. Thus did an Americanized environment occur? Yes, and what's more it could be argued that it presented the world's first post industrial globalized environment, so geographically widespread was its use within the British Empire.

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