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Alastair Service, The Architects of London and Their Buildings from 1066 to the Present Day

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Alastair Service, *The Architects of London and Their Buildings from 1066 to the Present Day*. London: The Architectural Press; New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1979. 227 pp. \$21.95.

Review by Roch-Josef di Lisio

Mr. Service has given us a fine and useful book, albeit narrow in its scope, limited as it is to the London scene. At once a guide to some of London's major buildings and a brief but pithy history of English architecture from the Norman Conquest to the Post-Modern age of the late 1970's, he presents concise but thoroughly worthwhile biographies of some of the great names in English architecture as well as some lesser-known but nonetheless important individuals in that field.

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English architecture from the beginning is the embodiment of the European schools. This is not to say that the English mind and spirit have not played a major part in the final form of the English building — they have and very much so. The initial feelings for stone and design that flowed across the Channel have been absorbed and implemented with the English touch, the flavor of a people with their own special inspirations, their own needs and hopes, their own sense of excitement and beauty. Perhaps more than any other people the English have, with a definite resolve and an almost sacred respect, preserved the triumphs of their architectural heritage, though historically that heritage begins much later than those of her great masters abroad. Remains of Roman and Saxon architecture, though scant, are in evidence in today's England to be sure; however the works of the known master masons or master builders who worked in London and whose creations are the subject of this book date actually from the 13th century or Early English period of English architecture. The great master mason who emerges as more than a mere name and heads the roster of the illustrious geni of this book is, in fact, of the 14th century or the so-called Geometrical, Curvilinear, or Decorated period of English architecture.

The author of this work points out to us at the very beginning that the first architect to leave his mark on the City of London is none other than Inigo Jones, who does not come along until the late 16th century, the illustrious period of the English Renaissance. Nonetheless, by way of prelude we are treated to a few photos of the clean lines of the sublime Romanesque, the very pointed and decorated English Gothic, and timbered Elizabethan row houses. Thence, with Jones we are introduced to a representative tour of the great masters of English architecture and their achievements in London.

We are furnished with good black and white photographs of some of the masterpieces of London architecture, including the Tower of London, the original 11th-century massive keep which soars in crenellated dourness, its corner turrets crowned with 15th-century helms; the 14th/early 15th-century resplendent interior nave of Westminster Abbey, the work of the Gothic master mason Henry Yevele; the eminently controlled classicism of the Palladian-inspired Queen's House at Greenwich in the London suburbs, by Jones;

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Wren's marvelous St. Paul's Cathedral, a masterpiece of the late Stuart Renaissance style; the glorious richness, the soft curves and scrolls of the baroque buildings of Hawksmoor, Vanbrugh, and Archer; Lord Burlington's Chiswick House, the English derivative of Palladio's much-loved classical Villa; and so on through the great Victorians Pugin, Norman Shaw and his Queen Anne style, the endearing buildings of C.F.A. Voysey and Sir Edwin Lutyens (inspiration for so many of America's prosperous suburbs of the 1920's and 1930's — the Westchester County "dream house"); International Modernism with its box-like use of squareness and innovative use of glass; and finally, the tall upwards thrust of the steel and glass tower of the London architects of the post-World War II period to our own day.

Appended is a chronological list of the London works of Sir Christopher Wren, a listing of architect's appointments to the Royal Office of Works from the 13th to the mid-19th century, and a final Appendix on the building materials of London's architecture from brick to timber, with a short history and description of the materials and their uses. A short glossary of architectural terms is very helpful as well as interesting and a select bibliography of general works on the architecture of London, as well as on the individual architects, provides references for further study.

For the historian, the architecture enthusiast, the world traveler, the general reader, *The Architects of London* is a breezy summation of the lives and works of some of the world's greatest artists, a thorough compendium of useful information, a quick but penetrating glance at a great city's loveliest buildings. Though biographies of these architects abound, and excellent and not so excellent histories and studies on the architectural record of Britain and London are profuse, nonetheless this fresh and honest presentation is a welcome addition to the world of learning and delight in the past. Its range is comfortably terse, its audience can be conceived of as wide, and its usefulness to amateur and professional alike is unquestionable.