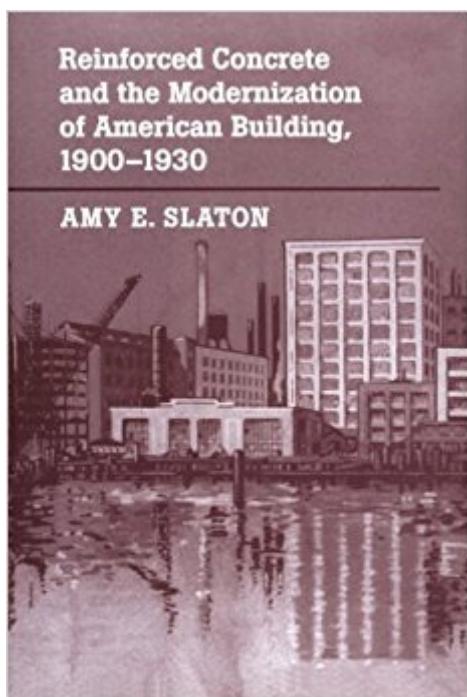


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Reinforced Concrete And The Modernization Of American Building, 1900-1930 (Johns Hopkins Studies In The History Of Technology)



Synopsis

Examining the proliferation of reinforced-concrete construction in the United States after 1900, historian Amy E. Slaton considers how scientific approaches and occupations displaced traditionally skilled labor. The technology of concrete buildings—little studied by historians of engineering, architecture, or industry—offers a remarkable case study in the modernization of American production. The use of concrete brought to construction the new procedures and priorities of mass production. These included a comprehensive application of science to commercial enterprise and vast redistributions of skills, opportunities, credit, and risk in the workplace. Reinforced concrete also changed the American landscape as building buyers embraced the architectural uniformity and simplicity to which the technology was best suited. Based on a wealth of data that includes university curricula, laboratory and company records, organizational proceedings, blueprints, and promotional materials as well as a rich body of physical evidence such as tools, instruments, building materials, and surviving reinforced-concrete buildings, this book tests the thesis that modern mass production in the United States came about not simply in answer to manufacturers' search for profits, but as a result of a complex of occupational and cultural agendas.

Book Information

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"Well researched and conceptually rich... a superior social history of concrete industrial buildings and the people—from engineers to workers—responsible for them." (Technology and

Culture)"[This] book is powerful; its claims are large and its analysis persuasive... [Slaton's] ability to present the continuities rather than the boundaries should give this book a wide readership; even if you are not interested in reinforced concrete, you should be." (Gail Cooper American Historical Review)"The social effects and cultural influences of a new aesthetic in the built environment that Slaton explores are helpful to business and architectural historians alike... In a sophisticated and analytical vein, Slaton offers an alternative to many accounts of changes in American business that stress a search for productive efficiency driven by managerial innovation." (Richard Roger Business History Review)"Well-researched, readable, and informative, the publication will be of interest to those concerned with both the technology and the social history of reinforced-concrete building." (Howard Newlon, Jr. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians)"[Slaton] makes good use of source material to make the case that forces other than simplistic technical imperatives drove an ideology of modernism within the concrete industry, precipitating conditions mediating the relationship of labor and technology, conditions that differed significantly from those prevalent in the wood and masonry building trades. She drives her point home with conviction." (Donald C. Jackson Enterprise and Society)"Slaton's work is a sophisticated marriage of sociology and history." (James B. McSwain EH.Net)"A valuable contribution to a growing body of literature devoted to the history of the industrial production, design application, and cultural appreciation of modern materials." (Dennis P. Doordan Journal of American History)"Solidly researched, clearly and soundly argued, Reinforced Concrete and the Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930 is an exciting and provocative contribution to our understanding of the intersections among commerce, technology, and science at the turn of the twentieth century." (Robert Friedel, University of Maryland, College Park)

Amy Slaton is an assistant professor of history and politics at Drexel University.

Dr. Slaton skillfully traces the evolution of modern building construction practice as well as the rise of the engineering field that made it possible. As an aside, she successfully argues that the emergence of modern architectural "design" was less of a European phenomenon than generally supposed. The research is thorough, and presented in a very entertaining fashion. The book's well worth the time and money.

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