

The Sixties and the Forgotten Man: A Non-Modest Proposal

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One July day long ago, a young man from Kansas decided to try his luck in the 1500-meter run at the annual US vs. British Commonwealth meet in Los Angeles. He set a world record that day against the Kenyan runner Kip Keino that stood for seven years. This was not new. As a younger man, he had shown promise in high school and was the first athlete his age to run a mile in under four minutes. By graduation, he had bested his own record several times and by nineteen had set a string of world records in the mile and half-mile. Ironically, this Topeka native had been cut from his school's basketball, baseball, and track and field teams as a teenager, and running cross-country was a last resort. Determined by grit or his Presbyterian faith, Jim Ryun became the youngest male track athlete ever to qualify for the Olympics. Eventually he medaled in three sets of Games over twelve years, received Athlete of the Year Awards, was elected to the National Track and Field Hall of Fame; and upon retirement from

running, entered business, then national politics as a Congressman on the Republican ticket, and received the Medal of Freedom from President Trump in 2020.

As Jim Ryun prepared to set world records, Robert Noyce was tinkering with something called an “integrated circuit” just invented by an engineer at Texas Instruments named Jack Kilby. Noyce was part of a group of engineers known as the “traitorous eight” that left their place of employment in Mountain View, California to see if they could realize the potential of a new piece of microelectronic equipment called a semiconductor. They started a company near Palo Alto that Noyce now ran whose name, Fairchild Semiconductor, reflected both the purpose of the company and the man who started it, Sherman Fairchild, whose “Camera and Instrument,” was a large military contractor on the East Coast. At Texas Instruments, Jack Kilby had used the element germanium as a conducting material for the hundreds of working transistors he had fit on a small grid-patterned platform called a “chip.” Noyce, however, favored the use of silicon as a substrate for cheaper manufacture and, for this decision, Fairchild became the most profitable semiconductor manufacturer in America. The traitorous eight formed the nucleus of a company that became an incubator of technology talent in today’s “Silicon Valley.” Eight years after his chip breakthrough, Noyce left Fairchild along with research director, Gordon Moore and fellow scientist, Andy Grove, to found Intel Corporation. A year later, electrical engineer Jerry Sanders left his marketing position at Fairchild to found a company called Advanced Micro Devices.

Louis and Mary Leakey were as interested in past affairs as the men of Silicon Valley were interested in future ones. And their achievements were no less profound.

Paleoanthropology was progressing nicely as a serious endeavor, and the British husband and wife team were trailblazers. The Leakeys had worked on digs in the Olduvai Gorge of the Serengeti for years—chain-smoking, surrounded by their dalmatians, and sharing a dinner table

with a variety of creatures from monkeys and snakes to owls. For his part, Louis was determined to test Charles Darwin's hypothesis that humans arose in Africa. Mary, a failed college student, had found little that interested her outside of excavation. The year Jack Kilby invented the integrated circuit, Mary found the team's first significant human remains—a fossilized skull of a hominid she called "Our Man" that, in time, became known as *Australopithecus boisei*. A short time later came a less robust though larger-brained specimen called "skilled man" or *Homo habilis*. Along with these spectacular Tanzanian finds began studies of another sort that the Leakeys, particularly Louis, sought to sponsor investigating the furrer ancestors of man. Jane Goodall began her sixty-year study of chimpanzees in nearby Kenya about the time that *Homo habilis* was named, and Dian Fossey started her quest into the Congo to find out what made gorillas tick. A third researcher, Birute Galdikas, studied orangutans in Borneo, and joined Goodall and Fossey as "Leakey's Angels," each of whom would become an important scholar in the field of primatology and contribute to solving the puzzle of human origins.

Jim Ryun set speed records on the ground. Sears, Roebuck & Company dreamed of setting distance records in the sky. And the design firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill was set to help Sears reach its goal, and keep Chicago the laboratory of architecture and design it had been for decades. Sears was the world's largest retailer and decided to consolidate its thousands of employees in the Chicago area into a three million square foot building on the western edge of the Loop. Such a structure carried a footprint too large for any mature downtown, so the solution, of course, was to build up; and architect Bruce Graham with Skidmore's chief engineer, Fazlur Khan, took on the design challenge—fresh off a partnership that had built the one-hundred story John Hancock building. The result was an impressive example of American optimism and retail confidence that increased in floor count as fast as Sears increased its projections for growth.

When completed, the “Sears Tower” was a quarter mile high—taller than any building to date, including New York’s unfinished World Trade Center—so high in fact that the Federal Aviation Administration worried about its effect on birds and air traffic. More important than height, the Sears Tower used Fazlur Khan’s system of mutually-supporting “tubes” that profoundly resisted lateral loads, including seismic and wind forces. These “tubes” —nine in the case of Sears—set off a renaissance in skyscraper building because they enabled architects to build, in Khan’s phrase, “cities in the sky,” with far less concrete and steel, yet with more expression in this medium than ever before.

Together, these examples portray imaginative, rigorous, and disciplined tasks in what one would assume were productive and reasonable times. So it may come as a surprise that these achievements are little known precisely because of *when* they took place: the 1960s.

The 1960s in the United States have achieved iconic status in the eyes of professors, students and the general public who tend to connect the decade with revolutionary social and political unrest and cultural change, reflected in phrases such “flower power,” “teach-ins,” “days of rage,” “the personal is political,” “America’s second civil war,” “tune in, turn on, drop out,” “give peace a chance,” “sex, drugs and rock & roll.” The period is associated also with a parade of people such as Twiggy, Betty Friedan, Janis Joplin, Richard Nixon, Ken Kesey, Mrs. Robinson, Bob Dylan, Malcolm X, and Nikita Khrushchev; with places like My Lai, Woodstock, Altamont, Haight-Ashbury, Woolworth’s, Cuba, Selma, and Watts; and even initials such as JFK, LBJ, MLK, MIA, SDS or LSD.

In a typical account of the 1960s there is great attention devoted to four areas: civil rights, feminism, Vietnam, and the Counterculture. These signature themes have become so dominant in people's minds that it is difficult for most to recall anything else that occurred during the decade.

Books, articles, television documentaries, and college courses weave together year after year a common narrative around a common fabric of themes. Papers and conferences on the era, such as at the University of Texas in 2012 or Texas Christian University in 2017, for example, deal with little but these themes—as have many books of the period published since 1987:

- John Blum, *Years of Discord: American Politics & Society, 1961-74* (1991).
- Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (eds.), “*Takin’ it to the streets*” (2011)
- Tom Brokaw, *Boom: Voices of the Sixties* (2007).
- Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History* (1999).
- Mike Davis & Jon Weiner, *Set the Night on Fire: LA in the Sixties* (2020)
- Gerald J. DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged* (2008).
- David Farber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (1994)
- Henry Finder (ed.), *The 60s: The Story of a Decade* (2016).
- Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (1987).
- M. Isserman & M. Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (2010).
- Charles Kaiser, *1968 in America* (1988).
- Mark Lytle, *America’s Uncivil War: The Sixties Era, Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon* (2006).

- Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the US* (1998).
- J. Morrison, *Camelot to Kent State: The Sixties in the Words of Those Who Lived It* (1987).
- Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie* (1989).
- Christopher B. Strain, *The Long Sixties, 1955-1973* (2017).
- Irwin Unger (ed.), *The Times Were a Changin': A Sixties Reader* (1998).

Many of these books are superbly written and enjoyable. But the larger point is that they tell the same story while discounting huge swaths of human achievement occurring in that period—from the intricacies of foreign affairs to discoveries in medicine and the wonders of architecture; from business issues to sports, entertainment to science. These books also overlook the ways that many Americans lived their lives in the years 1960 to 1970 or so—raising families, building businesses, attending schools and churches, and pursuing happiness in the ways they saw fit within a bustling market economy. The standard history of the 1960s indeed is one we think we know, and one we see every day; a time so important to LIFE magazine that it devoted an entire commemorative volume to it in 2019, entitled “The 1960s: the Decade When Everything Changed.” But here in words and pictures yet again was a rearrangement of the decade’s four themes, as incomplete and misleading as the books published each year that leave out many of the vital people, places, and things that made the decade hum.

In 1883, a Yale sociologist named William Graham Sumner presented a lecture that warned against what he saw as the growing encroachments of the state to solve social problems. The lecture eventually became an essay entitled “The Forgotten Man” and described a sort of algebra of politics whereby well-intentioned progressives often coerced average citizens into supporting dubious social projects. Sumner wrote: “As soon as A observes something which seems to him to be wrong, from which X is suffering, A talks it over with B, and A and B propose to get a law passed to remedy the evil and help X. Their law always proposes to determine . . . what A, B, and C shall do for X.”

C? What *about* C? Where does he come in? Sumner was talking about laws that roped large segments of society into causes in which they played no part, had no need for, but for which they were expected to pay. There was nothing wrong with A and B helping X, but Sumner was concerned with them speaking for C and putting him on the hook, as “the man who never is thought of.”¹

Sumner’s A-B-C device is useful to address the gap in the literature on the 1960s. A discussion of the classic themes of civil rights, Vietnam, the counterculture, and feminism—is longstanding. Glorifying the radical 1960s, however—the loud, exceptional, interesting, wonderful, psychedelic 1960s—gets in the way of getting to know everything else—the “Cs,” the contributors, the quiet producers, the innovators who don’t self-promote or march, are not brought forth by historians, and have no obvious advocates. These are the men and women who

¹ While W.G. Sumner created “the forgotten man” in the 19th century, I am indebted to Amity Schlaes for the revival of this idea in her book *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: Harper, 2008).

made the era what it was in a variety of fields including athletics, engineering, technology, science, medicine, entertainment, and others. It is these who are always left out, deserve credit, and to whom I want to pay some attention.

I hazard to state that the large number of less-written-about events, people, and inventions of this storied time are equally—possibly more—enduring than some of the higher profile things identified with the 1960s today. Three of these areas – foreign affairs, architecture, and developments in economics – touched millions at the time they occurred.²

Forgotten . . . Foreign Affairs

As crucial markers of the period, Vietnam and Cuba no doubt loom large, but they are just two of many developments in the dynamic world of international relations during this time. A 1960s discussion without Europe, Japan, China, India, South America, or the Middle East is, to say the least, incomplete; and has direct bearing on why the world looks the way it does today. Diplomacy, in fact, is not as limited as accounts of the 1960s would lead us to believe. Diplomacy takes us across six continents—as it does in other decades and times—and, indeed,

² It has become almost customary to treat the 1960s more as an era than as a decade. For this reason, I refer in this paper to a "Long Decade" starting in 1960 and stretching to 1974/75 when the 1960s exhausted itself in the scandal of Watergate and the agony of Saigon.

was so important in the 1960s specifically that a book on the subject labeled these years nothing less than “*the crucial decade*” in international relations.³

The five American presidents of the long decade paid great attention to the complicated state of world affairs, and White Houses from Eisenhower to Ford would likely marvel at accounts of the period whose sole concern was Cuba and Vietnam. In 1961, the new president John F. Kennedy would describe a dangerous world—“half slave and half free”—with many moving parts. Germany, Korea, and Vietnam were divided. There was a “first,” a “second,” and a “third world.”

For Europe, the “iron curtain” that descended north to south after World War II made the broadest story of the continent until 1989 the management of peoples on either side of that line. The eastern states were adjuncts of the Soviet Union with comparatively little say in their affairs. For Western Europe, it was the story of its three largest members. Germany and France had economic miracles in the 1950s and 1960s. Under the extraordinary Konrad Adenauer, a rearmed Germany became one of the backbone states of NATO and a reliable American ally. Under the equally extraordinary Charles de Gaulle, France narrowly escaped catastrophe with its North African colonies after experiencing humiliation in Indochina; and France began the independent path that continues to this day within the Western alliance. Great Britain’s economic recovery was weaker than Germany’s or France’s, and the 1960s challenged her to define a new role in the world after unwinding the lion’s share of her empire by 1975. With decolonization, Britain was in a sense orphaned in the 1960s. Perhaps because of this, she became America’s closest Cold

³ Diane Kunz, *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations during the 1960s* (New York: Columbia, 1994).

War ally and her prime ministers became key advisors to American presidents in managing the West's relationship with the Soviet Union. In this way, Britain exercised informal influence around the world while relinquishing her central naval and financial role to her former colony, transferring ship bases and acquiescing to the dominance of the dollar after Bretton Woods.

Not only Europe, the 1960s contain antecedents that help us understand today's events in the Middle East as well. The phenomenon of Nasserism is coterminous with the era under study, fanning the flame of Arab nationalism, opposing Israel to the point of war, and turning the region into a Cold War cauldron. We see the rise of the Soviet-financed Aswan High Dam on the Nile (1958-70), the formation of the PLO (1964), the appearances of Yasser Arafat (1964), Saddam Hussein in Iraq (1968), Hafez al-Assad in Syria (1970); and the indomitable "Lion," King Hussein, who ruled Jordan for fifty years through trials that would have toppled a lesser man.

Without the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, the geography of the Levant and the status of Jerusalem would be impossible to explain. The follow-on 1973 war unleashed OPEC's "oil weapon" near the end of our Long Decade, and disrupted most of the industrialized world. All this static created turmoil for the wonderfully stable state of Lebanon, with its cosmopolitan capital, Beirut, for which the 1960s was a golden age, as it was for Iran. The 1960s and 1970s were the years of Shah Pahlavi's modernization drive that united conservative opposition against him and generated the counterrevolution that established the Islamic Republic in 1979 that today aspires to nuclear power.

Everywhere the world was active, and usual accounts of the 1960s take no notice. The giant South Asian states of India and Pakistan created from the British retreat in 1947 chose separate paths of socialism and capitalism, and saw different economic results. In the 1960s they clashed over Kashmir, saw China and the Soviet Union take sides, and the region became one of

the most dangerous places on earth—even seeing a war between the Indians and Chinese themselves. Indo-Pakistani tensions of the 1960s peaked in a terrible conflict that saw the birth of Bangladesh, and more importantly, fueled both powers to go nuclear to defend against each other.

For all the 1960s' attention to Vietnam, accounts overlook tensions between Malaysia and Southeast Asia's largest maritime state—Indonesia—under the stern and guiding hand of Sukarno. It is not a small detail to recall that the Indonesian communist party (PKI) was the third largest in the world throughout the decade, or that Indonesia in 1964 aspired to nuclear weapons, and had formal alliances with China and the Soviet Union. Likewise the leadership of Tunku Rahman to 1970 explains why Malaysia looks the way it does today ethnically and geographically with the acquisition of territory and the jettisoning of an independent Singapore in 1965. In Southeast Asia, these were transformational years for Australia as well, which emerged from isolation after the war and, with a new immigration policy, became a magnet for people looking for opportunity from all over the world. The largest engineering project in its history that developed the Snowy Mountains region in the southeast of the country supported the growth of the great coastal cities, symbolized for so many today by the construction of the opera house at Sydney. With resolve and vitality, Australia and New Zealand became staunch American allies in a new defense architecture in the Pacific during the Cold War to replace the British after their withdrawal of forces “east of Suez” in 1967.

The postwar years and the 1960s were exciting ones across Asia. Like Germany, Japan underwent what *The Economist* called in 1962 an economic miracle. And, as reliable as Germany became in Europe as a Cold War ally, “hot war” in Korea and Vietnam made Japan an “eastern barracks” for the United States and moved Japan from hardship to prosperity in an astonishingly

short time. Indeed the 1960s saw the transformation of Japan from an island nation on the periphery of Asia once determined to dominate its neighbors by force into a worldwide economic giant committed to peace. Growth rates were almost unprecedented in modern economics. By 1970, Japan's national wealth dwarfed all countries in Asia with its per capita income ten times greater for example than all the nations of Southeast Asia combined. The Tokyo Olympics in 1964 and the Osaka Expo '70 signaled the arrival of a giant, and so did the arrival in 1972 of the first Honda Civic to the United States.

Japan was the sensational growth story of the 1960s rarely told. So is the emergence of the Asian Tigers that became outposts of economic fireworks and affect everyone today in manufacturing, services, and at times, military affairs. Each took off on its growth path in the Long Decade and they form a spectacular sequence of familiar names: Taiwan (1959), Hong Kong (1961), South Korea (1963), and the richest tiger today, Singapore (1965). These became economic successes for others to follow in later decades. For the United States, they were important islands of stability in a Cold War climate dangerous to predict or control.

The four "little tigers" emerged into the world in the 1960s. "Mama tiger" Japan excelled magnificently. Meanwhile, China turned in on itself, convulsed and burned. The Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and Cultural Revolution (1966-1975) were Mao Zedong's attempts to control and modernize China at terrible cost, and at a time almost exactly coterminous with the 1960s period. Within this turbulence, the mid-1960s contain the Mao-Russian rupture that militarized the Sino-Soviet border with nuclear weapons and further complicated international relations by shifting the world from a two-power Cold War into a Sino-Soviet-American triangle.

Across South and Central America were kaleidoscopic changes of which Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress" was but a small part. Brazil threw up a new capital on the edge of the

jungle, and seemed to verge on great power status. Argentina went the other way though, while Chile suffered the largest earthquake of the twentieth century, saw the socialist experimentation of Allende, and the butchery of Augusto Pinochet. *Operation Condor* unsettled the continent from Bolivia southward, while the northern state of Colombia was remarkably stable except for the FARC terrorist organization. FARC, of course, still plagues Colombia today as well as Venezuela, which had helped found OPEC in 1960 and enjoyed the region's highest standard of living and cordial relations with the West during the 1960s. Tiny French Guiana became a crucial launch site for rockets of the European Space Agency, and several Caribbean states organized themselves into a free trade association in 1965.

In Canada, Mexico, Scandinavia as well as in Congo and across Africa in the wake of European decolonization, important events of the 1960s occurred that rippled into the future and explain why the present looks the way it does. There was much around the world that was forgotten in a decade that seemed to demand a president's attention everywhere and at all times, not just in Havana or Saigon.

Forgotten . . . Architecture

The long 1960s take a particularly durable form in the area of architecture. From performing arts centers to commercial structures; from art galleries to sports stadiums, bridges, airports, libraries and churches, building after building appeared across the United States from 1960 to 1975 as testimonies to American ingenuity, commercial confidence, and economic strength.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, architects emerged who maintained modernism but questioned some of its functionalist ideology. The period saw buildings of various modern styles with names such as the “New Formalism” (Edward D. Stone, Minoru Yamasaki, the middle period of Philip Johnson) and the “New Brutalism” (Louis I. Kahn, Harry Weese). The period included explorations in expressionistic and playful forms (late Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen), and a particularly kitschy version of modernization derisively called “Googie,” reflecting the Space Age (Paul Williams). Here was a loosening of the strictures of functionalism and a start of experimentation with such elements of classicism as symmetry, columns, and arches; indeed a leniency in the direction of the very eclecticism that practitioners of the Bauhaus curriculum deemed anathema and sought to stamp out. This new direction came to fruition during the 1960s and took off in later decades with many well-regarded architects operating today.

Architects in the 1960s sought to humanize modern architecture. Thus was born “mid-century” style to dilute the engineered repetitiveness of the Bauhaus School epitomized by Mies van de Rohe; and to recapture the architects’ discretion to experiment within the straightjacket of modernism. Thus appear such architects as Louis Kahn, Eero Saarinen, early I.M. Pei, and Philip Johnson employing classical allusions in structures, and Louis Kahn’s student, the late Robert Venturi, saying in book form that it was more than desirable to do so.⁴ The many ways architects managed this transition to postmodernism is one of stories of the 1960s, and it is exciting to chart this shift across buildings, styles, architects and firms.

⁴ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* from 1966 discussed in Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London, 2007), 346.

This style transition also concerned the changing business aspects of the profession. Partly in reaction to low wages for architecture firms, the 1960s saw the reemergence of the architect as entrepreneur, developer, and coordinator which, according to historian Andrew Saint had not been seen on a large scale in the United States since Burnham and Root in late nineteenth century Chicago, or since the Beaux Arts powerhouse McKim Mead and White dictated architectural taste on the East Coast between 1885 and 1910. By the mid-1950s, a model of the corporate type of architectural firm—acutely attuned to markets and property values—was springing up all over the United States to rival the sole practitioner, and was the progenitor of such firms as Harrison and Abramovitz, Charles Luckman Associates, I.M. Pei and Associates, and the remarkable Skidmore Owings and Merrill (SOM).⁵

Such combinations were needed for the ambitions of the 1960s. Economic growth rates in the United States were high as were business earnings. SOM's foremost designers—Gordon Bunshaft in the New York Office, and Walter Netsch and Bruce Graham in Chicago—embodied the structurally articulate work of Mies van de Rohe and were identified with the design of office buildings that, in the wake of the Seagram Building in New York (1958, Mies), explored the uses of steel or concrete-framed construction and modular planning. Structure after well-known structure became commercial signatures of the era, such as the Pepsi Cola Building (1960) and the Chase Manhattan Bank (1961) in New York; the Tenneco Building in Houston (1963); Bank of America in San Francisco (1969), or the John Hancock Center in Chicago (1970).

⁵ Andrew Saint, *The Image of the Architect* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 80-87; 138-49.

The long 1960s indeed marked a return to U.S. cities as the preferred sites of modern architectural intervention and changed the face of urban spaces. The California architect, Victor Gruen, an Austrian immigrant, attained recognition in the 1950s and 1960s building shopping malls on city edges including the first air-conditioned one in Edina, Minnesota; and these high amenity public spaces became more the norm than the exception throughout the nation, including large retail complexes of urbane style in Dallas (Northpark, 1966) and Houston (the Galleria, 1969-71). American cities began to deploy federal Urban Renewal funding to reconfigure countless city centers such as Boston's Government Center or the splendid performing arts complex at Lincoln Center that reclaimed seventeen acres of midtown Manhattan. So-called "superblock" projects organized around paved or landscaped open spaces and incorporating car parking became the norm in U.S. urban development; and saw such projects during the 1960s as the Charles Center in Baltimore (1962, Mies), Century City in Los Angeles (1966, Yamasaki, I.M. Pei, Cesar Pelli) and the Peachtree Center in Atlanta (1967-72) by architect-developer John Portman. A rethinking of existing sites and buildings in something called "adaptive reuse" proved that modern or postmodern architecture could be designed to be compatible with historical buildings as well. Nowhere is this more impressive than in the conversion of a former factory into Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco (1964) or the transformation of Lafayette Square in Washington D.C. (1969).

While large federal or corporate projects abounded in the 1960s, there remained room for the aesthetic ideal at the core of the architect's craft, exemplified by a practitioner such as Louis I. Kahn who, as master at the University of Pennsylvania from 1957 to 1974, overlapped the 1960s exactly and formulated one of the era's most distinctive styles. Kahn kept to modern precepts of function-generating-shape but explored brick and concrete construction in a way that

engaged history and archetypes in structures with great emotional intensity (1967, Salk Institute, La Jolla, CA). In place of structural frames and walls of glass identified with the modernism of the Bauhaus, Kahn used shadows and skylight to create structures of monumental solemnity (1960, First Unitarian Church, Rochester, NY; 1965, Phillips Exeter Academy Library, NH) and spoke of natural light as though it were a material substance. His influence and originality enabled him to replace Mies as the most admired U.S. architect by the end of the 1960s.

Kahn was identified with the formation of the Philadelphia “school” of architects as “schools” multiplied regionally across the country in the 1950s and beyond. Chicago possessed a “school” identified with practices of Mies, as did Los Angeles that followed Richard Neutra and the *Case Study House* demonstration house program. Alongside larger firms, such as SOM, distinctive reactions to modernism took shape associated with individuals and projects such as Charles Moore’s *Sea Ranch Condominiums* in California (1965); Antoine Predock’s adobe *La Luz* residential community in New Mexico (1969); and Paola Soleri’s *Arcosanti* community north of Phoenix, Arizona (1970). Others who established their practices during the 1960s but made their greatest contributions to postmodern architecture later include, for example, Frank Gehry (est. 1962), Richard Meier (1963), Michael Graves (1964), Robert A.M Stern (1969), Charles Gwathmey (1969), and Renzo Piano (1971).

Shops small and large reaped commissions from generally good economic conditions, unprecedented build-outs of college campuses, business spending, and from projects that sometimes demanded idiosyncratic architectural responses such as for Seattle’s *Century 21 Exposition* (1962, Space Needle) and San Antonio’s *HemisFair '68* (1968). Still, the era witnessed considerable change in the role of the architect. Practices shifted to offer clients complete design and technical management services, and architects operated most often now as

just one member of a group made up of many disciplines—from marketing to engineering to real estate sales.

However changed, large firms and individual ateliers produced a huge quantity and variety of work that enriched and beautified the lives of millions of Americans in the 1960s. It was a watershed time in the history of American architecture that began a style change to postmodernism and an occupational shift that assigned many a solo architect to a business team. It was a time when trends were underway yet incomplete, and the American economy was sufficiently productive for companies and institutions to build significant structures with significant architects to reflect their outward and visible successes. 1960s architecture was all the more remarkable for its production before computers, before CAD, before the technology introduced at the end of 1960-1975 period that made possible the sculptural creations of today.

Yet for all its importance, the 1960s was a time, like others, when architects were far less known to the general public than the buildings they created. They were indeed “forgotten men.” Many structures of the period are loved and well-known. But they too are “forgotten” because they are unassociated with the period which produced them in favor of issues and pursuits deemed more important. Below are several iconic but “forgotten” structures of the 1960s.

Verrazano Narrows Bridge, NYC

(Othmar Amman, eng., 1960)

Marina City, Chicago, IL

(Bernard Goldberg, 1959-64)

Case Study House 22, “Stahl,” Los Angeles, CA

(Pierre Koenig, 1960)

Theme Building, LAX, CA

(Paul Williams, 1961)

TWA Flight Terminal 5, Newark Airport, NJ

(Eero Saarinen, 1962)

Air Force Acad. Chapel, Colorado Springs, CO

(SOM, Walter Netsch, 1963)

Gateway Arch, St. Louis, MO

(Eero Saarinen, 1963)

General Motors Building, NYC

(Edward Stone, 1964)

Houston Astrodome, Houston, TX

(Hermon Lloyd & W.B. Morgan, 1964)

Vanna Venturi House, Philadelphia, PA

(Robert Venturi, 1964)

Hilles Library, Harvard U., Cambridge, MA

(Wallace Harrison, 1965)

Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX

(Louis Kahn, 1966)

World Trade Center Complex, NYC

(Minoru Yamasaki, 1968)

Geisel Library, UCSD, CA

(Pereira & Associates, 1968-73)

Transamerica Pyramid, San Francisco, CA

(Pereira & Associates, 1972)

Sidney Opera House,

New South Wales, Australia

(Jorn Utzon, 1959-74)

Forgotten . . . Economics and Business

Underpinning the building surge and diplomacy of the 1960s was the financial strength of the United States economy, the dollar, and the ingenuity of American companies that were either founded or went public between 1960 and 1975. From 1961 to December 1969 alone, the United States exceeded the effervescent growth of the 1950s and achieved its longest economic expansion of the twentieth century.

The economic achievements of the 1960s spun out in relation to World War II even though the war ended fifteen years before Kennedy. With Japan's surrender, the devastation of the world was almost complete: the defeated vanquished, the victors crippled. The United States alone remained the proverbial "last man standing" and, almost by default, magazine publisher Henry Luce talked about a future "American Century."

As the 1960s began, Kennedy stated in his televised debate with Richard Nixon that he wanted "to get America moving again," and he likely meant it. Growth had slowed in the late 1950s. The 1960 economy appeared to have stagnated, unemployment had risen above 5 percent, and "creeping inflation" stalked the US economy. Internationally, the number of dollar claims held abroad that year exceeded U.S. gold supplies for the first time. Here was a "new frontier" indeed.

At Yale, President Kennedy proposed a "new economics" in June 1962 to coax a tepid economy, and to encourage a stock market that had signaled its discontent by falling 25 percent in six months. To spark economic growth and keep it going, two revenue acts materialized—in 1962 under Kennedy and in 1964 under Lyndon Johnson. They included tax cuts and in the case of Johnson, the largest stimulative fiscal action taken by the federal government in peacetime.

Together, these two revenue measures made the 1960s economically dynamic; the first half particularly so. The apparent triumph of the "new economics" led policymakers in the 1960s to believe they could "fine tune" the economy, abandon annual balanced federal budgets, even abolish the business cycle. This was likely only partially true under Kennedy, who lacked the redistributionist tendencies that a commitment to social welfare liberalism represented. He also escaped the full demands of a war in Southeast Asia. Johnson committed to both.

“Guns & Butter” described twin challenges for the Johnson years after 1964. American economic growth gave a false confidence that the United States could finance Vietnam and expand the role of government by the 500 new agencies that blossomed from Great Society promises in the presidential campaign. December 1964 may have been “the most hopeful time since Christ was born in Bethlehem,” Johnson averred. The trouble was that something had to give, and it did.

Military spending jumped in late 1965 as the number of troops to Vietnam spiked. Congress and the President neither raised taxes nor cut domestic spending—for example, on the so-called war on poverty. Rather, an increased budget deficit financed spending and came at a time when the economy already had low unemployment and the least excess capacity since the end of World War II. Inflation almost doubled in 1966.⁶ The Federal Reserve tightened for the first time in the decade, and talk of a “credit crunch” led to talk of financial panic. The stock market crashed at the end of the year as a harbinger of difficult times to come, and the economy skidded enough in 1967 for the Fed to loosen again to restart growth.

Despite the hopeful nature of LBJ’s 1968 State of the Union address, Nixon reaped the whirlwind of Vietnam upon taking office in 1969. He also had to manage the nation’s fragile domestic economy and its deteriorating international finances. Nixon declared inflation as the nation’s primary macroeconomic problem. He cut federal spending, the Fed raised rates, and the budget achieved its first surplus in eight years; yet the economy continued to misbehave. As the economy turned to negative growth in 1970, unemployment rose but inflation also spiked to such

⁶ Samuel Rosenberg, *American Economic Development since 1945* (Houndmills, 2003), 114-116.

an extent that a new phenomenon, “stagflation” took hold, seemingly impervious to standard policy.

After resisting Congressional urgings for price and wage freezes in 1970 to control inflation, Nixon implemented these in phases after the *overall* American balance of trade—in surplus in the early booming 1960s—turned negative for the first time in the twentieth century.⁷ In the 1940s and 1950s, Europe was the focus of American aid and investment. In the 1960s Europe remained, but Asia came on board as a location for the export of American dollars in the form of massive military expenditures for a war that Johnson thought would be shorter than it turned out to be.

The United States used trade surpluses since 1945 to finance activities abroad, including military operations and such programs as the Alliance for Progress in Latin America. Throughout the 1960s surpluses were shrinking. With rising inflation in the United States, foreign central banks were inundated with dollars as foreign holders converted dollars into their home currencies for fear of devaluation. The hinge year was 1970 when the trade *and* capital accounts went negative permanently as dollars flowed out of the United States chasing yield after the Federal Reserve turned to easy monetary policy to stimulate the economy. Confidence in the dollar sunk. In 1971 Great Britain asked to convert \$3 billion of dollar holdings into gold, and the rest of Europe followed. President Nixon faced a run on U.S. gold stocks as claims against the United States were gravely out of balance with resources to pay them—at least by Bretton Woods standards. The United States held \$12 billion in gold. Foreign claims stood at \$40 billion.

⁷ Finkelstein, *American Economy*, 116.

In a fateful Sunday night speech, August 15, 1971, the President announced the closure of the “gold window” without consulting members of the international monetary community or even his own State Department, and ended the convertibility of the dollar. Thereafter known as the “Nixon Shock,” the United States repudiated at the end of the 1960s the financial arrangements it had created in the period of its maximum relative power. Thus 1971 saw the end of an era of gold stress that expanded liquidity with dollars and maintained convertibility to mend the world economy, yet broke when the postwar recovery it sought to foster was achieved. Over the next few decades, the IMF endorsed a new orthodoxy that money should flow freely across borders.

Business formation and growth flourished in the 1960s despite the uneasy relationship of gold to dollars just recounted. Military imperatives of the Cold War, Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, and tariff reform ended American isolation and provided major openings for expansion to industries and companies that had already profited mightily from wartime production, such as oil, steel, chemicals, aircraft, motor vehicles and electronics. All these sectors saw their reckoning with the full recovery of Europe and Japan during the early 1970s, but the 1960s still saw American dominance. The formation of the Common Market with a population of 172 million in 1967 and a GDP of \$170 billion made Europe especially an important receiver of direct investment dollars from American multinationals that benefitted both sides of the Atlantic.

The 1960s continued the trend of conglomerate building, which began in the mid-1950s. The mergers that created large diversified companies provided bankers a lot of lucrative business and was one reason for the era acquiring the nickname “Go-Go Sixties,” and with the help of low interest rates and a fifteen-year bull market in equities that began in 1952, giants such as Textron,

Litton Industries, Teledyne, and Transamerica emerged that still exist today though in different form. This was the era of IBM's preeminence, the heyday of American television manufacturers such as RCA, Zenith, and Motorola; the prime innovation years of Xerox Corporation, a seminal R&D period for AT&T Bell Laboratories, and the time when Boeing introduced both its bestselling airplane ever, the 737; and its largest, the 747.

The world recovered after World War II and America's dominant position in business and commerce declined to pre-war levels. The recovery benefitted American firms but created companies in Germany and Japan that became arch competitors in the early 1970s in industries that were dominated in the 1950s and 1960s by Americans such as cars and consumer electronics. And in this lies one of the great unheralded 1960s stories: the restoration of competitiveness and prosperity throughout the world from Taiwan to France, and the United States' central role in bringing this about with its critical supply of dollars for rebuilding and trade.

GNP figures confirm the broad rise in the standards of living of the era. Western Europe enjoyed real GDP growth rates averaging over 4 percent in the 1950s, and very near a spectacular 5 percent a year in the 1960s, compared with 3 percent in the 1970s and 2 percent in the 1980s. Japan's growth dazzled in the 1960s, at between 10-13 percent, as did others.⁸ The GDP of the United States is closer to a 4.5 percent average in the 1960s for growth—faster than any other decade in the twentieth century—and this meant a GDP that doubled from \$543 billion to \$1.1 trillion between 1960 and 1970—the decade of gold stress. More extraordinary was the 1960s' increase of productivity in non-farm businesses by a staggering 50 percent over the

⁸ Stephen Marglin & Juliet Schor (eds.), *The Golden Age of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1992), 49 .

previous six decades averages, lifting living standards.⁹ Here was an engine of growth for the world economy that changed its character with the “Nixon Shock” but was nevertheless powerful and indispensable.

Established companies such as General Motors, U.S. Steel, Honeywell, and Standard Oil of New Jersey prospered in the postwar and the 1960s, and expanded business overseas. They benefitted during the war and afterwards grew larger. But competition and innovation did not die because large companies grew larger. The most basic asset to business or any enterprise—its success, its failure, its creativity—is people, and the world in the 1960s was in the midst of a boom in human capital. With established companies doing well, entrepreneurs started and built some of the most beloved names in America. Below are fifty of the thousands of new companies founded or taken public during the period of 1960 to 1975.

Companies Founded: Sample 1960-1975

Duane Reade, 1960

Medtronic, 1960

Frito-Lay, 1961

Humana, 1961

Nike, 1962

Wal-Mart Stores, 1962

⁹ Thomas K. McCraw, *American Business 1920-2000: How It Worked* (Wheeling, 2000), 160.

CVS Pharmacy, 1963

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, 1963

Comcast, 1963

Pennzoil, 1963

Parker Hannifin, 1964

Petco, 1965

Best Buy, 1966

K-Swiss, 1966

MasterCard, 1966

Southwest Airlines, 1967

Qualcomm, 1968

Royal Caribbean, 1969

Sturm Ruger, 1969

Federal Express, 1970

Barnes & Noble, 1971

Starbuck's, 1971

Air Florida, 1972

Cablevision, 1973

Microsoft, 1975

Companies Going Public: Sample 1960-75

Mattel, 1960

Alberto-Culver, 1961

Automatic Data Processing, 1961

KB Homes, 1961

Lowe's, 1961

H & R Block, 1962

Becton Dickinson, 1963

Weyerhaeuser, 1963

Schlumberger, 1964

Harley Davidson, 1965

McDonald's, 1965

Target, 1966

Denny's, 1966

New York Times, 1967

Dollar General, 1967

Hyatt Hotels, 1967

Hasbro, 1968

Rite Aid, 1968

Dillard's, 1969

Scholastic Corporation, 1969

Intel, 1971

Merrill Lynch, 1971

Nordstrom, 1971

Pizza Hut, 1972

Mylan Labs, 1973

Gap Stores, 1975

Recasting the 1960s

Economics. Foreign affairs. Architecture. In these briefs, I trust what emerges is the complexity and variety of human activity that requires imagination and rigor to achieve noteworthy results. From here we could move into medicine, aerospace, sports, and others; and after our survey, we might conclude that our “Long 1960s” —from 1960 to 1975 or so—was not only interesting but crucial for advancing the human condition in the twentieth century, and be curious to know more.

Our curiosity in this broad approach smacks of heresy, though, because we've given the 1960s meaning without the classic themes that, for many, make the '60s the '60s. I've taught a popular history lecture on the 1960s for years, and have come to strenuously embrace "heresies" outside the classic themes, foremost out of interest, but equally to save the 1960s from becoming a shallow caricature of itself. If the objective of college courses, books, and documentaries on the 1960s is to convey a sense of a past era—and one reason we study the past, I assume, is to explain why the present looks the way it does—then current portraits of the 1960s will not do. They are narrow and, in their narrowness, misleading.

My briefs on architecture, foreign affairs, and business, for example, have raised the possibility of a huge range of human endeavor doggedly taking place below the boisterous aspects of the 1960s, yet inexplicably never discussed. And not only are such achievements left out, what is included is often misleading.

The common theme of the 1960s' counterculture connected to art and music such as the *Grateful Dead*, *Jefferson Airplane*, Janis Joplin, or productions of *Hair* are lionized as typical of the period. Unmentioned are the extraordinary and popular musical achievements in a much larger mainstream culture, every bit as edgy in their own ways. The highest grossing movie of the "Long 1960s," after all, was not *Hair*, but *The Sound of Music*, and the Best Pictures of the period included *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), *Oliver!* (1968), and *The Godfather* (1972).

There was hardly anything psychedelic about *The Andy Griffith Show* that lasted the entire era. *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* had long Broadway runs, *The Carpenters* debuted spectacularly, and Merle Haggard commanded large country music audiences. Who knew?

Like the gold standard, the entrepreneurship that founded companies like Comcast or FedEx, or the notable buildings we listed—these productive things just seemed to *happen*—undiscussed, un-heralded, and unassociated with any place or time. They were part of what we might now call the incomplete, unmentioned—even “underground” —Sixties.

In colleges, it’s no wonder this incomplete picture persists. Students across the country sign up for “1960s classes” based on a cloudy impression of what they think the era was: Woodstock, sex-drugs-rock ‘n roll, Vietnam. Born in the 1990s or later, it’s all exciting to them, and students are rarely disappointed because the books and lectures confirm what they expected anyway—the classic themes. They tend not to know history well, lack precedents against which to evaluate claims, and are persuaded that the 1960s era was unprecedented, unique, and special like no other. Year after year after year, professors, filmmakers, and authors portray the 1960s as sensational, different, better, and progressive. And this approach attracts students who become different, better, and progressive by association. Students find nothing amiss. Nor do professors. To the contrary, with the current record of repetitious publications and college courses, it appears that people speaking and writing about the 1960s are unaware of leaving anything out because they assume they’ve covered everything important.

And this impression of the 1960s is not just in the classroom. From television (“The 1960s: The Years that Shaped a Generation,” CNN 2005) to magazines (“1969 Commemorative Issue,” “The 1960s: The Decade When Everything Changed,” *LIFE* 2019; “People Magazine’s Salute to the Beatles,” 2019), this pattern persists. I’m reminded of a book published a few years ago entitled *The Tyranny of Clichés* where the author points out that most clichés contain grains of truth. As often, though, clichés are misleading, vacuous, or simply wrong for what they leave out. Still, if one says the same thing again and again people start to believe it, defend it, and the

idea takes on a life of its own.¹⁰ Civil rights, Vietnam, feminism, and the Counterculture are presented again and again, and students as well as the general public (and perhaps readers of this journal) have trouble coming up with anything else that happened during the decade. Dylan book after Dylan book, Kent State documentary after Kent State documentary, Malcolm X lecture after Malcolm X lecture, reinforces this, and people come to believe that the 1960s was only a certain few things. For so long, the history of the era has been misleading by what it excludes. And narrowness certainly has implications for any free society that depends for its survival on citizens having information for decision making.

In 2008 Gerald DeGroot wrote an important book that opened the door to the idea that the 1960s was not so much a place of facts as one of dogma and faith “zealously guarded by those keen to protect something sacred;” a “hallowed” time whose followers “violently objected” to an expansion in scope or the questioning of the assumptions or ideas of the era. It is difficult to find another decade treated this way—certainly in the twentieth century—where material is so restricted and presentation so narrow.¹¹

Expansion beyond the classic themes that this paper proposes invites fury for a number of reasons, not the least because it treads close to the radical notion that the 1960s might not be the decade of “first times” that it claims to be; of unprecedented changes; of things that “never happened before.” These assertions of uniqueness come as a result of what we might call a kind of “heliocentric conceit” that tags the 1960s as the special decade of the twentieth century around

¹⁰ Jonah Goldberg, *The Tyranny of Clichés* (New York: Sentinel, 2013).

¹¹ Gerald J. DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-5.

which other decades revolve; that events move towards the bright 1960s and events come from it, but, in any case, the decade has a sort of gravitational pull like no other.

The era, for example, claims for itself the conceit of civil rights. This neglects the advances in civil rights after the Civil War, including so many black Congressmen in the nineteenth century; Truman's initiatives of integration of the military in the 1940s, and tends to claim Rosa Parks, Central High School, and Birmingham for the 1960s rather than credit the often-maligned 1950s, or any Republican Party input.

Besides civil rights, the 1960s claims pride of place for something it calls a "counterculture" even though people since ancient times have "tuned in, turned on, and dropped out" from what they considered an establishment. Certainly drugs, meditation, and retreating from society have pedigrees older than Ken Kesey or Timothy Leary—from Syriac monks to Henry David Thoreau to Edgar Allen Poe. And what of this fancy phrase, "The Generation Gap?" Are we to believe there is something unprecedented about kids rejecting parental values and authority? Or, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, are we showing a fantastic grasp of the obvious by finding something unusual in teenage rebellion? As for the conceit of Vietnam, was war protesting, opposition to a president, or civil disobedience on the home front unknown in American history before the 1960s? James Madison in 1812 and Abraham Lincoln in 1861 would have something to say here.

One would think that presentations of the 1960s would deepen in content or abandon its *sui generis* conceits over time. If this is happening, it is not apparent in publications or productions on the era which, however well done, remain dedicated to variations of the four themes. And it is not happening in universities where no other decade competes with the 1960s in course catalogues. Indeed, this pattern may continue so long as professors and authors are as

personally attached to the material as they are now. In preface after book preface, writers on the Sixties make clear they are reconnecting to a formative period in their lives, and many treat the era personally with phrases such as “for me,” “for us;” a time when “we” did this or that.¹² In their autobiographical approach, authors wall off the decade from all others, and claim it for themselves as a special place and era—“a time remembered.” As one editor of a survey on the era boasted, “The history of America in the 1960s has admirably resisted becoming just another dry-as-dust subject of scholarly inquiry.”¹³

The stunning things this assertion reveals about closed academic attitudes on the 1960s are not new, and are connected to the personal nature of recent writing on the period. What *is* new is that those authors who consider their unusual closeness to the 1960s a genuine asset as a voice of the past are endangering the seriousness of the 1960s as a field of study. DeGroot, for example, agrees with essayist Louis Menand who asserts that “the great problem with Sixties scholarship is that it is written by those who care too much about the decade.”¹⁴ It is a problem because those most committed to the specialness of the 1960s are those perpetuating its narrow

¹² Five examples of authors’ personal association with the era include Charles Kaiser, *1968 in America*, ix-xxv; Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, *America Divided*, ix-x; Tom Brokaw, *Boom*, xv-xxiii; Bloom and Breines (eds.), *Takin’ it to the Streets*, xviii; Mark Lytle, *America’s Civil Wars*, ix-xvi.

¹³ David Faber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 1.

¹⁴ DeGroot, *Unplugged*, 5.

scope, and considering it fine. And with this, I'd like to close with three corrosive effects this narrowness is having on perceptions of the 1960s period as years go by.

First, knowledge of other decades makes singling out the 1960s as the "most important, special and unique" time of the twentieth century increasingly discredited, even silly. Are the changes and challenges of other times unworthy of note, simply to be patronized as some kind of prelude to the "Days of Rage?" Who would not admit the achievements of the decade before the First World War if they knew them, or the 1920s and others? The Sixties are at a disadvantage since they don't have the kind of completeness that gives other decades their credibility and color.

Secondly, a broadening of approach would make the 1960s more interesting. Students appreciate new material and, ironically, the repetition of the same material associated with the era is making even the wildest psychedelics appear beige. It's not that people discount the classic themes. Many simply find civil rights, Vietnam, and feminism tedious since they've heard so much about them anecdotally or in classes. Important material is valued less with repetition, and risks becoming a dull cartoon that must be presented evermore fervently to have any kind of impact at all.

I suppose each generation seeks its own kind of engagement with the past. For our purposes, college students today have far less personal attachment to the 1960s than the books they read or the professors who teach them. As years pass, I suspect that the current presentation of the 1960s will become increasingly uninteresting as people learn a more proportional, accurate, and complete account. They may already be doing so. The thousand students of my 1960s survey already rate the 1960s mainstream culture (e.g. medicine, sports, architecture) of

equal or more significance to the counterculture even though the counterculture is naturally edgy and novel to young people.

Thirdly, contradictions. The narrow presentation of the 1960s violates the values the era claims to represent. Historians of the 1960s claim to chronicle so-called "under-represented" groups and viewpoints; provide voices for the voiceless, long-disregarded, under-appreciated; outside the mainstream. Sixties documentaries, books, and courses do this successfully and well—so well that they've crowded out everything else. Now, the voiceless and under-represented are the scientists, the inventors, the athletes, and achievers from every field who have no place in the tapestry of the Long Decade. Now ironically, those who once relished taking on "the establishment" have created a new establishment of themselves. Devotees of the 1960s now lack diversity of presentation and view; indeed have become a new kind of mainstream with the qualities of exclusion they once decried—even despised—for being less than open, less than vital, less than representative, inclusive, or free.

I am not arguing that we do to the 1960s the equivalent of recounting the 1940s without World War II, the 1930s without the Depression, or the 1770s without the American Revolution. I am simply seeking balance in scholarship and teaching for an era that has been lopsided for so long. When one forges ahead on this ambitious proposal—as we are doing now in something called *The 1960s Project* (the1960sproject.com), the result is a welcoming journey of discovery; not the repetition and exclusion we have today. It completes the picture of the 1960s for those old enough to remember and for anyone interested in historical accuracy and depth.

In the end, it would not be surprising to find that the period from 1960 to 1975 was, if still quirky and wild, a lot more normal than is often admitted, and not as unique as is often supposed. Its quirkiness will remain, and its "normal" will come in the same way that other

decades are “normal” —with ordinary people like Jim Ryun or Fazlur Khan doing extraordinary things in a thousand walks of life with energy, ingenuity, and drive.

In 1988 John Diggins wrote a book entitled *The Proud Decades* that started with Pearl Harbor and ended—tellingly—in 1960.¹⁵ Fifty years after Woodstock, the Sixties are important for all the reasons people don’t know about. It’s a decade of which people *should* be proud for reasons they’ve never heard. It’s time to change this. It’s time to recall William Graham Sumner’s “Cs,” and tell their good stories. It’s time to remember “the Forgotten Man.”

¹⁵ John P. Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace 1941-1960* (New York, 1989).