



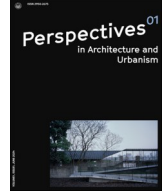
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## Research Article

# Lin Huiyin, *House Beautiful*, and women's place in architectural culture in the United States in the 1920s



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## ABSTRACT

Scholarly discussions of the experiences that Lin Huiyin would have had as a student in the United States between 1924 and 1928 have yet to include the experiences she might have had outside the classroom that educated her about contemporary and historic architecture in the country and about the role that women at the time had in understanding and shaping it. The shelter magazine *House Beautiful* provides an overlooked indication of the exposure to and participation in architectural culture available to middle class and wealthy women in the United States in the years in which Lin Huiyin studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale. Understanding how the magazine, which was written largely by and for women, celebrated the architecture of the country's own past, as well as of China, and the way in which it provided a stepping-stone to either a literary or an architectural career suggests the encouragement Lin may have received from the women she met and how they in turn may have been inspired to take an interest in the field, at a time when there were very few female architects.

## 1. Introduction

In 1924, Lin Huiyin arrived in the United States to study art and architecture at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, from which she received a Bachelor of Arts degree three years later. After a brief time as a student of stage design at Yale University, Lin and her husband Liang Sicheng returned in 1928 to China, where Lin taught architecture, shared in her husband's research into the history of Chinese architecture, and became a respected literary figure. Lin was the first woman from China to study architecture in the United States, at a time when it was unusual for women anywhere in the world to become architects (Fairbanks, 1994).

For instance, Mary Louisa Page, the first woman to study architecture in the United States finished her course at the University of Illinois only in 1878; Louise Blanchard Bethune and Minerva Parker Nichols, the first women to practice

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there, opened their firms in the following decade (Allaback, 2008; Schumacher et al., 2024). When Lin arrived in the country, many of the few women architects she may have encountered worked, as Lin herself would, in partnership with their husbands. She may have become aware, for example, of Marion Mahony, who worked for Frank Lloyd Wright before marrying Walter Burley Griffin (Van Zanten, 2011). Griffin won the competition for the new Australian capitol of Canberra largely on the strength of Mahony's extraordinary drawings of his design. It was, however, much more common for a woman interested in architecture to write about the subject than to design her own buildings. Such in turn could provide the foundation for a career as an author. The most celebrated instance available to Lin was Edith Wharton, who co-authored *The Decoration of Houses* with Ogden Codman before becoming a celebrated novelist (Wharton & Codman, 1898).

Lin must have at times been frustrated by the limitations she faced as a woman. She was, for instance, not allowed to study for a professional degree in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, being instead relegated to a degree in fine arts. The first two women to complete bachelor's degrees in architecture at Penn graduated only in 1936, long after Lin had returned to China (Lloyd, 2001). Lin undoubtedly had already learned in England, where she studied at St. Mary's College before coming to the United States, that although women in the English-speaking world were not expected to remain in the home, they were typically charged with presiding over its interior decoration and, furthermore, that it was possible to support oneself by crafting the domestic furnishings and decorative details that signaled the refined taste of those female consumers who could afford them (Thomas, 2020).

The fullest picture of women's engagement with architecture in the United States in the period in which Lin was there comes, however, from the shelter press, that is the monthly magazines directed at and largely written by women, that were intended to educate them to become astute consumers of domestic architecture and interior design, as well as to advise them about gardening. The shelter press targeted general interest readers rather than design professionals and focused almost exclusively on homes and housing. It comprised an important subset of the many magazines published on both sides of the Atlantic and targeted at women that offered advice on these topics (Darling, 2019). *House Beautiful*, which began publication in Chicago in 1896, is the oldest of a genre that by the end of the twentieth century was ubiquitous in many countries and languages (Fig. 1).

Journalism, including writing about the home, its architecture, and its decoration, was a field that had been open to educated women in the United States since the middle of the nineteenth century. During Lin's American sojourn *House Beautiful* was edited by Ethel Power, who was at the helm from 1922 through the end of 1933 (James-Chakraborty, 2024). During her tenure as editor, Power commissioned articles from nearly 500 different writers who can be identified as women (other authors went by their initials, obscuring their gender identity, while some women

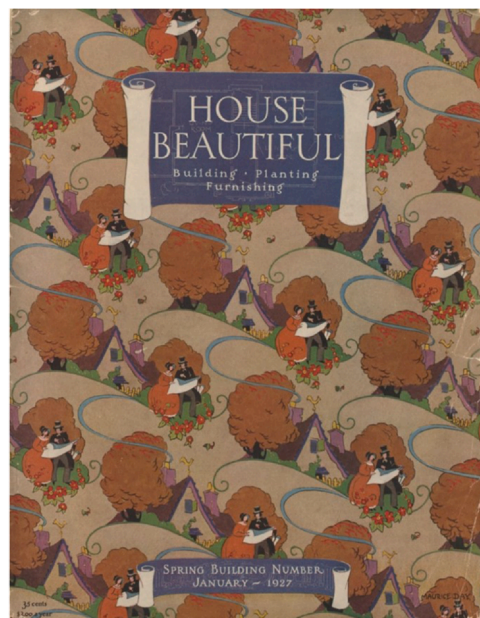


Fig. 1. *House Beautiful*, January 1927. From Day, M. (1927, January). [Cover design]. *House Beautiful*, 61(1), Cover. Fleet Library, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA. Source: Digital Commons@RISD.

may—following the examples of novelists such as Georges Sand and George Eliot—have adopted male pseudonyms). These women far outnumbered the men who contributed articles to the magazine's pages.

Power had studied architecture at the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, which from 1915 to 1942 offered its entirely female student body training from Harvard faculty in those two professions at a time when that university's graduate programs did not yet allow them to study them. She attended classes alongside her personal partner Eleanor Raymond, who initially worked in collaboration with their teacher Henry Atherton Frost before establishing her own architectural office in 1928 (Cole, 1981). The cover of the January 1923 issue captured how Power understood the purpose of the houses she encouraged readers to build, or at least buy and furnish. "For renters everywhere, My New Year Resolution," it spelled out in a Gothic font similar to that employed for newspaper mastheads, "To build my own house. To give it within and without the Character of my own Thought and Taste, to Live in it, to Love it and to Make of it a new strong Bond of Affection between Me and Mine" (Jacobsen, 1923).

It is quite likely that Lin encountered the magazine, which was widely available on newspaper stands and in local libraries; the Free Library and Athenaeum of Philadelphia still both have complete runs. In the 1920s *House Beautiful's* circulation figures almost certainly far exceeded those of any architectural periodical published in the country at the time, and at thirty-five cents an issue or three dollars for a year's subscription, it was also moderately priced. *House Beautiful* would have been the easiest place for Lin to turn in order to learn more about contemporary American domestic taste. Whether or not she read it herself, is almost impossible that she did not interact with women who read it, as well its two rivals, *Home and Garden* and *Better Homes and Gardens*, founded respectively in 1901 and 1922. Lin's conversations with upper middle class American women about the field she was studying would undoubtedly often have been shaped by the exposure such women had to these publications.

From *House Beautiful* Lin could have learned why its readers appreciated traditional architecture, about their interest in China's art and architecture, about how women interested in architecture could also pursue literary careers, and, last but by no means least, about how women could build careers in architecture and in related fields. *House Beautiful's* coverage of the Colonial Revival (the term encompassed admiration for the domestic architecture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as well as the years from 1609 to 1776 in which much of the Atlantic seaboard had been British colonies) offered an example of how to integrate a respect for the past into contemporary architecture, while the attention it paid to China validated that country's architecture and gardens as a legitimate field of scholarly research. Although the magazine's writers demonstrated little literary ambition within its pages, several went on, like Lin herself, to undertake careers as writers. Finally, even if very few women practiced architecture in the United States at the time, *House Beautiful* took them and their work seriously.

## 2. Reasons for reviving the past: *House Beautiful* and the Colonial Revival

Much is known already about the formal Beaux-Arts-oriented education Lin and Liang received from Paul Cret and others at the University of Pennsylvania, where they studied alongside such figures as Louis Kahn (Vincent, 1994). It is unlikely, however, that this constituted Lin's entire exposure to the contemporary architectural scene in the United States at the time, even if we also factor in her experience studying set design at Yale, especially as she arrived already fluent in the English language due to the time she had previously spent in England. For instance, while training at Penn often focused on monumental civic structures, leafing through the pages of *House Beautiful* would have exposed Lin to a very different discussion of how to combine modern comfort and convenience with a respect for the vernacular housing of an earlier era. Philadelphia had been the largest English-speaking city in North America in the eighteenth century. The brick rowhouses characteristic of its development across the eighteenth through the early twentieth century were beginning by the time Lin was present in the city to be cherished symbols of the city's prominent contribution to the American Revolution, as the place where the Declaration of Independence was written and signed, and where the constitutional convention was also held. A 1924 article by Elizabeth Bootes Clark described how they were being "snapped up quickly by artists and the artistically inclined and furnished in keeping with the old-fashioned interiors—much old furniture, brass, and cross stitching, old glass and pottery" (Clark, 1924, p. 479). Lin may even have frequented some of the many tea houses that studded the Society Hill neighborhood Clark was describing.

Power and indeed also Raymond, who in 1931 published a book entitled *Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania*, consistently championed the revival of what was widely termed "colonial" architecture, although not to the exclusion of its Spanish-inspired California equivalent, Tudor-flavored imports from England, or even the International Style (Fig. 2). For Raymond, there was no contradiction between this architecture and the International Style that she was about to adopt in a house for her sister Rachel. She noted in her forward that "observation of the modern movement, both abroad and at home, and a close study of these old Pennsylvania buildings will clearly show that the motives and ideals of both are the same. To perceive how sincerely these houses and farm buildings manifest their functions, how



Fig. 2. *House Beautiful*, April 1925. From Orr, F. W. (1925, April). [Cover design]. *House Beautiful*, 57(4), Cover. Fleet Library, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA. Source: Digital Commons@RISD.

perfectly they are expressed in the best materials at hand is only to recall that these qualities are the identical ones exemplified by all the great architectural movements of the past” (Murphy, 2011; Raymond, 1931, unpaginated).

There are fascinating parallels, although the two take very different forms, between the enthusiasm that *House Beautiful* had for the Colonial Revival during Lin’s time in the United States with her own fascination with the Chinese courtyard house, a subject in which the magazine also took an interest. The eighteenth-century New England or Pennsylvania village dwelling or farmhouse that provided *House Beautiful* with its favorite precedent for the exterior appearance and interior ornament of contemporary suburban dwellings was a free-standing brick, or more often wood-framed, clapboard clad block set in its own garden, as opposed to the inward-facing Chinese compound, strongly defined by plastered brick boundary walls that sheltered rooms arranged around one or more courtyards, with a private garden located to the rear. The many women who wrote in *House Beautiful* about how to update such American dwellings, as well as about the Colonial Revival houses the magazine published, defended this return to the past in ways that may well have resonated with Lin when she embarked upon her career as an architectural historian.

The tie to a patriotic past mattered in the United States, where such buildings were strongly associated with the achievement of independence from Britain (interestingly, the magazine paid much less attention to architecture from below the Mason Dixon line, where buildings were much more likely to have been erected with the participation of enslaved labor from Africa or of African descent). Mrs. Harrold Gillingham, for instance, exulted when she was able to place upon the extension to her modest farmhouse a doorway salvaged from a tavern past which George Washington must have regularly traveled (Gillingham, 1925). Moreover, although historians have traced aspects of the Colonial Revival back to Britain and Ireland, its apparent relation to local conditions was prioritized by *House Beautiful* authors, even as they also sought to educate readers about the history of European architecture and the models it provided for contemporary domestic architecture. This emphasis on the indigenous as a response to place may also have appealed to Lin.

*House Beautiful* authors did not, however, want their readers to dwell in the past. They also favored the Colonial Revival specifically because it was not late Victorian. In particular, they prized the relative lack of ornament of their eighteenth-century precedents as emblematic of a simpler era in which ostentatious displays of luxury were frowned upon. Rose Greely, a landscape architect who had studied alongside Power and Raymond at the Cambridge School, wrote in 1922 of a house designed by Frost and Raymond, that “In the Victorian Age, convenience would have been considered an enemy of beauty. But now, fortunately, we see beauty in simplicity, rather than in elaboration” (Greely, 1922, p. 420). Similarly, the Colonial, as reconfigured for the present day, was understood to be relatively informal, something that was unlikely to be true of the Chinese courtyard house, whose spatial disposition reinforced traditional hierarchies within the family. Indeed, the plan of the Colonial Revival house, and even of original Colonial houses that

were being reconfigured for modern use, was likely to be quite different from those of the originals.<sup>1</sup> Modern informality was stressed. For instance, although *House Beautiful* devoted considerable attention to the antiques that had originally furnished such dwellings, including porcelain and other goods imported from or inspired by China, they were now to be combined with suitably upholstered sofas and chairs (Allen, 1923; Button, 1923). In an article illustrated with eighteenth century furniture, or reproductions of it, drawn by Verna Cook Salomonsky, Lucy D. Taylor, wrote that the use of such pieces “does not mean a stiff, formal room built upon an arbitrarily chosen decorative scheme, having no part and parcel with our ordinary Twentieth Century living interests. It need not be a copy of something that appealed to our ancestors. No, it means taking pieces of furniture that we like and need, studying their elements ... and placing them so that the room is fairly throbbing with suggestions of life and activity” (Taylor, 1922, p. 438). Most importantly, *House Beautiful* instructed readers on the modern mechanical systems that were a welcome feature of new and updated houses (Hoover, 1924; Jones & Short, 1924; St. John, 1925). These included, in addition to electric lighting, electric or gas heating, refrigerators in place of ice boxes, and modern plumbing, encompassing hot and cold running water for showers, as well as sinks and bathtubs, not to mention indoor flush toilets, all of which remained unimaginable luxuries for most Chinese, especially those who continued to live in courtyard houses.

### 3. *House Beautiful's* encounters with China

These key differences did not impinge, however, on the interest that Power and at least some of her readers took in Chinese architecture and gardens. Articles on the topic, some written by women from the United States who had crossed the Pacific themselves, appeared infrequently but steadily in the 1920s. Not surprisingly, considering the pervasive Orientalism of the day, the emphasis was not on the contemporary Chinese city and its architecture, but upon “traditional” design paradigms whose origins pre-dated the Opium Wars and with them, significant European interference in Chinese affairs, although one article did focus on the houses of expatriates from the United States. The July 1924 cover, for example, showed two Chinese men building a temple out of oversize Mahjong tiles and dice at a time when the game was fashionable among many of the magazine’s readers (Fig. 3).

It is very likely that Lin was aware of Lucy Monroe Calhoun, the author of one of these. Calhoun returned to Beijing from 1921 to 1937, following her husband’s stint as United States ambassador to China from 1909 to 1913 (Calhoun, n.d.). She had already written art criticism before her marriage; in Beijing she lived in a former temple and occupied herself in part in photographing her historic surroundings. In April 1925 she published an article in *House Beautiful* on her highly unusual Chinese home, “whose furnishings,” the subtitle read, “are used not quite in the Chinese way.” Calhoun explained that “It is only within the past twelve or fifteen years that foreign residents of Peking [Beijing] have discovered that Chinese houses may be easily adapted to their requirements.” This, of course, entailed “the addition of baths and plumbing and a few connecting rooms” to “give comfort,” but “a little ingenuity in the line of decoration produces delightful results against the background of the individuality and charm offered by the house itself” (Calhoun, 1925, p. 133). She herself lived in a former temple and expressed no qualms about its de-consecration. In a further picturesque conflation of building types that might have appalled Lin, the furniture in the salon was constructed out of former shop fronts. Calhoun wrote quite specifically to address not the general audience of *House Beautiful's* readers, the vast majority of whom resided in the United States, but those Americans who might be resident in China and required instruction in how to live comfortably there.

The appetite for such advice, as well as the curiosity readers based in the United States might have about the lives of Americans living so far away from home was further demonstrated in an article published later in the same year by Philip Newell Youtz on “American Homes in Tropical China” that he claimed combined “convenience with Chinese lines of architecture” (Youtz, 1925, p. 256). Youtz, who went on to direct the Brooklyn Museum, trained as an architect and began his career by designing school buildings in Guangzhou, formerly known in English as Canton (Philip N. Youtz is dead at 76, 1972). He opened his *House Beautiful* article, which illustrated the houses of a number of the American faculty as well as the Chinese president of Canton Christian College, by noting that “The word American is coming to apply more and more to an exceedingly cosmopolitan people whose please it is to make the picturesque places of the world at large their home” (Youtz, 1925, p. 254). For Youtz, the college’s houses, whether built by Chinese or Americans, could serve as a model for dwellings in the United States, especially for “American wintering in Florida, Southern California or other sunny localities,” without, of course, forsaking “Western notions of convenience” (Youtz, 1925, p. 280).

While Calhoun and Youtz focused on the suitability of at least some aspects of Chinese architecture for American tastes, the landscape architect Rose Standish Nichols took a different tack in her article “Some Old Chinese Gardens,”

<sup>1</sup> I thank Judith Hull for emphasizing this point in a conversation with me.

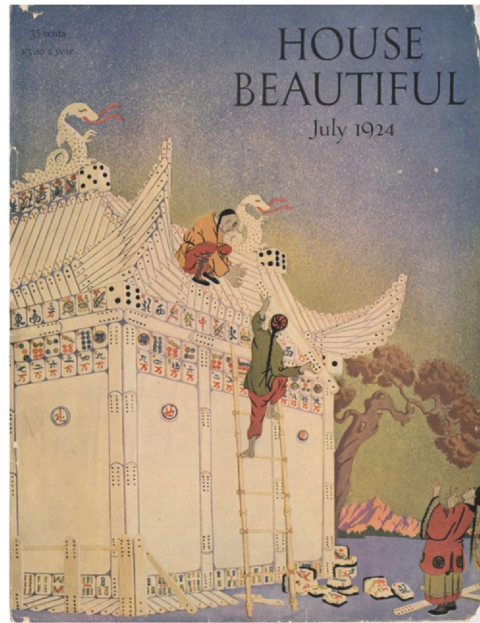


Fig. 3. *House Beautiful*, July 1924. From Orr, F. W. (1924, July). [Cover design]. *House Beautiful*, 56(1), Cover. Fleet Library, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA. Source: Digital Commons@RISD.

which appeared in 1927. Nichols, the niece of the sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens and the sister-in-law of Homer Sturcliff, another landscape architect, probably met Power through their mutual involvement in the campaign for women's suffrage (Nichols House Museum, 2020). In her opening paragraph Nichols declared, "In China certain combinations of rocks, water, trees, shrubs, and flowers symbolize an underlying philosophy, and may have a religious significance almost too profound to be expressed in words and far too complicated to be grasped in all its intricacies by the Occidental mind" (Nichols, 1927, p. 158). Nichols also emphasized the antiquity of the Chinese landscape garden tradition. It is not clear whether or not the well-traveled Nichols ever visited China; the article was illustrated with photographs by Calhoun and relied as well, by Nichols's own admission, on recent books by Florence Ayscough and Kate Kerby. Such publications had a discernable impact on garden design in the United States, as the garden Beatrix Farrand designed for Abby Aldrich Rockefeller at Seal Harbor on Maine's Mount Desert amply demonstrates (Tankard, 2022).

#### 4. Precedents for a literary life

If Lin was unlikely to learn anything about her own heritage from such interlopers, colorful or not, she may well have been inspired by other contributors to *House Beautiful*. By the time she arrived in the United States, the magazine's short-lived experiments with publishing poetry and short fiction had already concluded but writing about architecture in its pages continued to provide a pathway into a literary life. Perhaps the most celebrated example associated with the magazine was Lucy Calhoun's sister Harriet Monroe. Family ties mattered; in 1896, before becoming a regular contributor to *House Beautiful* in its early years, Monroe published a biography of the pioneering Chicago architect John Wellborn Root, who was married to a third Monroe sister (Monroe, 1896). She wrote for the magazine about, among many other topics, old brocades and jewelry as well as a palatial, if understated house, outside Milwaukee (Monroe, 1899a, 1899b, 1900). Monroe also helped establish the accessible rhetorical style that engaged rather than intimidated readers. Her use, for instance, of the term "we," as she recounted a tour of the house, encouraged readers to imagine that they were accompanying her through the building and its spacious grounds, while her explanation about how she had learned about old brocades showed them how they, too, could master such topics. She thus implied that her readers, most of whom at this early date in the magazine's history were probably Midwestern housewives, could appreciate the nuances of dwellings much larger than the ones in which they lived or that their communities had until recently had the opportunity to glimpse, as well as become connoisseurs of European antiques. This possible access to social mobility accounted for much of the magazine's allure, but it did not hold Monroe's

attention for long. In 1912, she founded the magazine *Poetry*. As its editor, she played a key role in the emergence of a distinctively modern approach to that literary form in the United States and encouraged the careers of many of its foremost practitioners, including such luminaries as T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens.

Monroe published her last pieces in *House Beautiful* in 1904, but the magazine continued to offer a stepping-stone for a life in letters. Perhaps the most significant example from the Power era, and one of which Lin may well have been aware, was Catherine Drinker Bowen. Described by the *New York Times* upon her death as “one of America’s foremost biographers,” Bowen was born in 1897 in the Philadelphia suburb of Haverford into a family of academics and artists with ties to China ([Catherine Drinker Bowen & Holmes Biographer, Dies, 1973](#)). Her father Henry Sturgis Drinker had been born in Hong Kong and raised in part in Macao; he later became the president of Lehigh University in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where Bowen’s first husband Ezra was on the faculty ([AIME, 2017](#)). Bowen was also the niece of the Philadelphia-based artists Catherine Drinker Janvier and Cecilia Beaux.

Bowen appears to have been inspired to write for the magazine by her experience moving into a new house. Her first article, subtitled “Neighborly Interest [in our new house] almost proved to be a disastrous liability,” published at the end of 1922, aims to be a light-hearted recounting of the house’s reception, although today her emphasis on her inability to communicate with her domestic help no longer reads that way ([Bowen, 1922](#)). What is evident, however, is how interested men and women alike, and apparently of all classes, in Easton, Pennsylvania, were in the construction of any new middle class dwelling. While the details focus on male engineering professors, the larger point is the intrusiveness of this fascination with any new home and its outfitting.

Bowen’s articles also reveal the racial prejudice that Lin likely encountered as well as Bowen’s admiration of Japanese, if not Chinese, aesthetics, then a powerful marker of class status. She had hoped to hire a male Japanese servant, whom she and her husband referred to as “Yokohama” when they were not employing an ethnic slur, and in consequence decorated what became the maid’s room with “a Japanese print that just happened to melt in with the brightness of the rugs and the delicacy of the walls” ([Bowen, 1923c](#), p. 32). No one of the desired description responded to her advertisement, however, and she ended up with a recent immigrant from Hungary who would have preferred flowered wallpaper, hung calendar art next to the Hiroshige, and wondered if the simply painted walls indicated that Bowen’s money had run out.

Bowen’s initial piece was such a success that Power commissioned an entire series from her. Entitled “The Amenities of Home Building,” it ran across much of the following year. This time Bowen, who was only 26, used her married name ([Bowen, 1923a, 1923b, 1923c](#)). Bowen, who rued not having consulted an architect and also repeatedly deferred to her husband, not least because he has already built a house that she had liked, was careful not to challenge male authority directly too frequently, but the overall tone of the piece encouraged the magazine’s readers not to repeat her own mistakes, presented for the most part in an entertainingly unpretentious manner. Thus, even if she had been naïve, they need not be.

## 5. Architecture as a career for women

Indeed, this was much of the point of *House Beautiful*. Women wrote for other women, instructing them on how to build, equip, and decorate their houses, as well as how to tend their gardens. But most important of all for Lin may have been the lesson that women could be successful architects. In 1923, an unnamed author who may have been Power herself commented ([Our Fifth Avenue Looking Glass, 1923](#)):

When woman first emerged from the fireside to take her place in the world, there appeared to be comparatively few avenues open to her. Man seemed jealously to guard the entrance to the professions; and the pioneers who went boldly on in spite of discouragement had no easy time of it. Even the arts, where woman had already made herself felt, had forgotten her, while she languished in a Victorian obscurity. She was permitted to write, to paint, and to model, but as a real factor in art she was negligible. The consequence was that woman rushed into many unsuitable occupations, and it is really only within the last few years that she has learned to capitalize the qualities that she was apt to look on as shortcomings when she first braved the world. Her perception, her appreciation of beauty, her charm of manner and grace of speech are womanly attributes that she would have discarded in favor of force, mathematical precision and kindred masculine virtues. Now she has learned to turn them to account, and is engaged in the occupations in which she can bring most. That these revolve to a large extent around the home is natural, and there is no doubt that we must look to women for the beautification of the home, and that it is the woman artists who are quickest to apply their art to everyday life. Architecture is a profession that has a special appeal to women and one in which they have excelled. Its kindred art, interior decoration, is ninety per cent feminine, and though one must admit that, like all new professions, it has attracted its unskilled devotees, it is equally true that women stand at its head in spite of man’s attempt to dislodge them.



Fig. 4. 1923 house by Howe and Manning in Cambridge. 3 Gray Gardens East, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Source: Copyright and permission of History Cambridge.

*House Beautiful's* coverage of the work of Verna Cook Salomonsky (later Shipway) and, until his death in 1929 her husband Edgar, confirmed this. As Catherine Ettinger has documented, Power frequently published their work, but she also importantly commissioned many articles from Salomonsky, who also frequently contributed to her chief competitor *House and Garden* (Ettinger, 2021). This was particularly remarkable considering that Salomonsky's husband had what may have been a Jewish and was certainly an Eastern European name, at a time when Power assiduously overlooked the presence in the United States of those who were not of western European Protestant descent and in which shelter magazines almost entirely ignored the urban neighborhoods in which many recent Jewish and Catholic immigrants lived. In an article entitled "The Influence of Tradition in Planning the House," Thomas Robinson argued that "it is not conceivable that an Irishman will become a good American by buildings and occupying a French cottage" (Robinson, 1925, p. 389). Nor did the country's few Chinatowns merit mention; it is not clear how Lin would have seen herself in relation to their mostly working class inhabitants, most of whom came from southern China. While it is almost certain that she experienced racism, it is also likely that in many circumstances, her elite background and excellent English buffered her from being associated with those who lived in tenements or modest apartments.

Although Salomonsky featured more prominently in its pages, *House Beautiful's* coverage of Lois Lilley Howe and the firm she headed, Howe, Manning & Almy, would have been equally inspiring to anyone familiar with the fact, not always spelled out in the magazine, that Howe and her partners were all women. A native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Howe graduated from MIT in 1890 and established her own firm four years later. Her success was assisted by her many family connections to prominent families in Cambridge and the greater Boston area but assured above all by her skill in designing houses that fitted seamlessly into the region's upper middle-class neighborhoods, many of which already featured eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century homes from which she often took inspiration (Fig. 4). She also excelled at updating and expanding existing buildings. After nearly two decades on her own, Howe entered into partnership with Eleanor Manning in 1913; in 1926, Mary Almy became the all-female firm's third partner. Both Manning and Almy had also studied at MIT. In addition to being active in women's organizations, Howe clearly enjoyed the respect of her male peers. In 1916, she became the first female member of the Boston Architectural Society and in 1931, the third woman to be elected to fellowship in the American Academy of Architects. Howe retired in 1937. She spent the remaining years until her death in 1964—a dozen days short of her 100th birthday—involved in local historic preservation efforts (Meister, 2014; Merrett, 2019).

Although Howe's work had been published in professional journals in the early years of her career, there was a hiatus of 16 years before that of Howe and Manning appeared in 1923 in the New York-based version of *Country Life* and debuted in *House Beautiful* (Boston Architectural Club Exhibition, 1906; Brown, 1907; House of Mrs. A. A. Burrage & Brookline, Mass, 1905; Howe, 1907; The Residence of Thomas H. Logan at Lynn, Mass, 1923). Power would continue to publish the work of Howe and Manning, and later of Howe, Manning & Almy throughout her editorship. Mary Kellogg did not name the architects who expanded a Cape Cod cottage for her, but she did note approvingly that they had been women (Kellogg, 1923). The firm would fare better three years later, when the magazine published a house by what was, at that time, a trio that had recently won first prize in a competition sponsored by Cape Cod's real estate board. Without noting the gender of the architects, the magazine noted that "the jury in its report on the house,



Fig. 5. *House Beautiful*, September 1924. From Day, M. (1924, September). [Cover design]. *House Beautiful*, 56(3), Cover. Fleet Library, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA. Source: Digital Commons@RISD.

commended particularly its simplicity and restfulness of outline, its admirable adaptation of Cape Cod architecture, and its charming and flexible plan,” which included a writing room between the kitchen and the dining area ([A Design for a Cape Cod House, 1926](#)). Power, who must have known her reasonably well personally, invited Howe in 1928 to join her as one of the three judges of the magazine’s annual small house competition, in which a design by Verna and Edgar Salomonsky secured second prize ([The Prize-Winning Designs, 1928](#)). The following year one of the firm’s recent houses appeared in the magazine’s *Small House Supplement*; a year later the magazine published one in New Bedford alongside one by the Salomonskys and one by Mary Elizabeth Winsor ([A House at Coolidge Hill, 1929](#); [A House in New Bedford, 1930](#)).

## 6. Conclusion

By the time that Power and Howe bestowed a prize upon the Salomonskys’ design, Lin had returned to China, where she is unlikely to have had access to the magazine. While it is impossible to ascertain for certain that she had been inspired by reading it or even skimming through it, there is no doubting the impact that *House Beautiful* in particular, and the shelter press in general, had upon architectural culture in the United States during the 1920s. In a society in which middle class and wealthy women had considerable say regarding the appearance of the domestic environment and during an economic boom that saw the expansion of the country’s railroad and streetcar suburbs as well as of smaller communities from coast to coast, its fanciful vision of the village it took to build a house was certainly one shaped as well as inhabited, although no people are shown present, by women as well as men ([Fig. 5](#)). Despite the very real discrimination Lin faced in the United States due to her gender, she carried these lessons back to China with her, where they helped her to become an inspiration for generations of Chinese architects to come.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Kathleen James-Chakraborty:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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