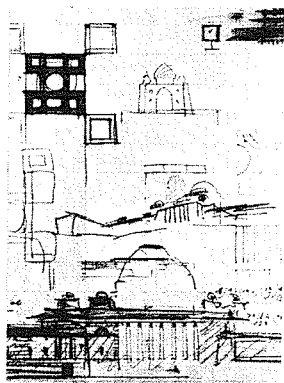


# CURRENT BOOKS

## FELLOWS' CHOICE

*Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center*

**INDIAN SUMMER:  
Lutyens, Baker and  
Imperial Delhi**  
by Robert Grant Irving  
Yale, 1982  
406 pp. \$39.95



*Viceroy's House, New Delhi. Pencil sketches by E. L. Lutyens, 1912.*

The Imperial Durbar held in the northern outskirts of Delhi in 1911 marked the apogee of the British Raj. At the conclusion of this royal assembly, King George V revealed the best-kept secret in the history of India: The capital was to be transferred from Calcutta to the more central and historically rich site of Delhi. Scene of 14 successive imperial capitals during the preceding 3,000 years, Delhi was then mere ruins and slums on an inhospitable malarial plain.

Irving, associate Fellow at Yale's Berkeley College, describes the planning and building of the new city (not completed until 1931) in fascinating detail. At the heart of the undertaking were its two principal architects, Sir Herbert Baker, a wealthy and established designer with buildings throughout the British empire, and Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens. Virtually self-educated, Lutyens was, like Baker, a fierce traditionalist. But he had also kept up with the "art and science of town planning" and gave as much attention to the problems of hygiene and traffic flow as to the "classic purity" of line in his buildings.

Both architects strove to create a sense of imperial grandeur with their imposing neoclassical structures. Unfortunately, by the time the city was completed, architectural pomp was out of favor, replaced by a starker, more functional style. But the layout of Delhi has stood up well in comparison with other modern "planned" capitals, such as Canberra and Brasilia.

Among the architects' inspirations were Hausmann's Paris and L'Enfant's plan for Washington. What emerged was a complex of grand diagonal avenues punctuated by hexagonal rond-points, with liberal space reserved for trees, grass, and water. Unlike L'Enfant, Baker and Lutyens incorporated residential streets, bungalows with spacious gardens, maharajahs' palaces, and workmen's apartments into their plans, mingling public ostentation and domestic privacy.

Plans, photographs, and sketches show Delhi's major buildings and the recurrent visual allusions to Indian mythology in murals and statuary. Unhappily, though, most of the illustrations are devoid of any human presence. They thus give little idea of the uses to which New Delhi and its many distinct localities are put today.

—George Morrison Carstairs