Edinburgh's New Town:

An Enlightened Enterprise

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Edinburgh in 1752 was a cramped provincial town on the fringe of European civilization. It had lost its royal court to London in 1603 when King James VI succeeded to the English throne, and its nobility had followed with the creation of a singular British parliament at Westminster in 1707. The city had no manufacturing to speak of, and its economic significance appeared to be waning with the growth of the Atlantic trade based in Glasgow to the west.[1] "The meanness of Edinburgh," declared a Scottish pamphlet, "has been too long an obstruction to our improvement, and a reproach to Scotland."[2] With political stability in Britain achieved following the final Jacobite defeat in 1746, many leading Scots were convinced that the crucial moment had arrived to redevelop and expand the city to entice commercial interests and the professional classes to locate there. Enlarging and beautifying Edinburgh would even benefit Scotland as a whole, they insisted, as "The improvement of the capital must necessarily bear some proportion to the improvement of the country."[3] Based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, this endeavor would come to be known as the New Town.

Eighteenth century Edinburgh was a medieval town, built on a sloping ridge about a mile in length, with the fortress of Edinburgh Castle perched atop Castle Hill on one end and the royal palace of Holyroodhouse at the other. Surrounded by deep valleys and a stinking marsh (the North Loch), the hill town was also walled and fortified to defend its residents from enemy armies, which historically had usually been the English. Within this confined area, the population had nowhere to go but up. The poor and wealthy alike were jammed into decaying, tottering tenements that rose as high as fifteen stories in height along the length of the Royal Mile.

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[1] Brian Edwards and Paul Jenkins, introduction to *Edinburgh: The Making of a Capital City*, ed. Brian Edwards and Paul Jenkins (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 9.
[2] Gilbert Elliot, *Proposals for carrying on certain public works in the city of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: 1752), 24, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.
[3] Ibid.

Between the sagging houses in the narrow side streets or "wynds," waste ran through open gutters (heaved unceremoniously from tenement windows), pigs and other animals rooted for food, and social classes mingled. It wasn't surprising, observed the young medical student Oliver Goldsmith in the 1750s, to "see a well-dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close."[4] In fact, Jane Maxwell, later Duchess of Gordon and leader of Edinburgh society, was once seen riding up the High Street on a sow which her sister drove on with a stick.[5] Staying overnight in Edinburgh in the 1720s, English surveyor Edward Burt noted that he was "forced to hide my Head between the Sheets; for the Smell of the Filth, thrown out by the Neighbours on the Back-side of the House, came pouring into the Room."[6] Seen from the shores of the Firth of Forth, the thick plumes of wood and peat-smoke rising from the pinnacles and the noxious fumes had given rise to a nickname for the town: Auld Reekie.[7] Even in these conditions, the population of Edinburgh continued to expand. The city grew from 20,000 inhabitants in 1600 to 30,000 in 1690, and then to 49,000 by the mid-eighteenth century, with only small additions to its area.[8] [9] This growth led to further overcrowding, traffic congestion, and uncleanliness. Devastating fires in 1700 and 1708, aided by the city's confined quarters, brought even greater urgency to expand the city.[10] [11]

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[4] Oliver Goldsmith to Revd Thomas Contarine, Leyden (n.d.), quoted in James Buchan, *Crowded with Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment: Edinburgh's Moment of the Mind* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 6.
[5] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 6.
[6] Edward Burt, quoted in Magnus Linklater, "Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment," in *The Great Cities in History*, ed. John Julius Norwich (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 217.
[7] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 6.
[8] Ian Campbell and Margaret Stewart, "The evolution of the medieval and Renaissance city," in *Capital City*, 33.
[9] Michael Carley et al., *Edinburgh New Town: A Model City* (The Hill: Amberley, 2015), 13.
[10] Campbell and Stewart, "Renaissance city," 35.
[11] Carley et al., *A Model City*, 31.

Despite all of these limitations, Edinburgh had a rich architectural heritage that dated back centuries to the European Renaissance. Before the unification of Scotland and England under a single monarch in 1603, Scotland had a long tradition of maintaining close commercial, cultural, and intellectual links with mainland Europe. The kingdom traded with France, Scandinavia, and the North Sea and Baltic states. Additionally, Scotland's four universities maintained close ties with their counterparts on the Continent, and Scots who traveled and were educated there brought home the ideas – and in some cases the stonemasons – of the Renaissance. For example, between 1411 and 1560 the University of Paris had seventeen rectors who were Scots, facilitating an exchange of architectural developments between Edinburgh and France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Russia. French architects and master masons worked in the Old Town for James V, including on Holyroodhouse, and Italian designs were incorporated into the Great Hall of Edinburgh Castle.[12] Many Scottish architects also undertook the Grand Tour of Europe: William Chambers (who later designed a mansion in New Town) spent four years in Paris and Rome, as did Scotland's Royal Masons William and Robert Mylne, and Robert Adam, who became friends with the famous Italian neoclassicist Piranesi.[13] While Adam was in Rome in 1757, he collaborated with the Belgian architect Laurent-Benoit Dewez, sketching a new design for the city of Lisbon which had been devastated by earthquake and fire in 1755. This enlightened plan called for the ordered disposition of society, separating the nobility, gentry, and tradespeople. Public buildings were positioned at key points in the city, and formal public parks

[12] Ibid, 28.
[13] Ibid, 29.

were located on each end. In these respects, Adam's plan resembled what would later be built in Edinburgh.[14]

After the unification of the Crowns, these Continental influences were complemented by English influences, particularly from London. In 1630, the Earl of Bedford wished to develop his lands in Covent Garden for housing. The Crown granted him the permission to do so but entrusted the plan to the king's architect Inigo Jones, who drew inspiration from the Italian architect Palladio. Jones proposed the laying out of a piazza, or open square, and enclosing this with a range of terraced housing blocks with a church in the center of the south side, a classic feature of Italian Renaissance town planning and architectural ideals. Jones also set up a visual axis that stretched along the eastern approach road, crossed the square, and terminated at the church – a planning feature used later in Edinburgh's New Town.[15]

The first moves towards expanding the city came in 1681. James, Duke of Albany and York (later James VII/II), had been appointed Lord High Commissioner of Scotland in 1679 and had taken up residence at Holyroodhouse. James had observed his brother, Charles II, personally oversee the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666, transforming it from a filthy, overcrowded city with parishes "enclosed or pestered with small tenements and homely cottages," into a modern commercial and scientific center.[16] James also viewed himself as an enlightened, modernizing European prince, and recognized the need for public improvements to alleviate overcrowding in Edinburgh. As High Commissioner, he advocated extending the Royalty of Edinburgh – the exclusive rights and privileges granted to the city by the Crown – to

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[14] Charles McKean, "Twinning cities: modernisation versus improvement in the two towns of Edinburgh," in *Capital City*, 48.
[15] Carley et al., *A Model City*, 29.
[16] John Stow, quoted in A.N. Wilson, "London: Renaissance to Restoration," in *Great Cities*, 195.

the open fields north of the city, accessed by a bridge over the North Loch. As monarch, James VII/II granted Edinburgh a charter for an extended Royalty in 1688. However, the Glorious Revolution of 1689 ended the reign of James and brought William and Mary to the throne, ensuring that the charter would not be ratified by Parliament.[17] The failure of the Darien scheme a decade later, followed by several years of famine further devastated the Scottish economy and prevented any development.[18]

Around 1700, the idea of a new town was revived by the political pamphleteer and theoretician Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun. In his studies on Greek architecture, Saltoun compared the civic virtue of Republican Rome with the culture outlook of the modern Scots. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Saltoun dreamed of "framing Utopias and new models of government," visualizing a renewed city that was noble, classical, and modern. "For as the happy situation of London has bin the principal cause of the Glory and Riches of England," Saltoun contended in 1698, "so the bad situation of Edinburgh has bin one great occasion of the poverty and uncleanliness in which the greater part of the people of Scotland live."[19] Like London, Edinburgh should be sufficient in scale and grandeur to bear the symbolic image of the state, possessing the physical criteria of the metropolis.[20]

Shamed by their apparent backwardness as compared to their wealthy southern neighbor, Scots intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and some politicians were determined to better conditions in their country. Their concerns led to the Act of Union with England in 1707, which was entered

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[17] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 174.
[18] Campbell and Stewart, "Renaissance city," 35.
[19] Andrew Fletcher, *Two discourses concerning the affairs of Scotland written in the year 1698* (Edinburgh: 1698), 52, *Early English Books Online*.
[20] Campbell and Stewart, "Renaissance city," 35, 37.

into largely for economic advantages which were not forthcoming until after 1725.[21] News of the Union took many patriotic Scots in Edinburgh by surprise. When the secret articles of Union were read aloud in October 1706 a riot erupted in the city, and three regiments of foot were deployed to keep order.[22] Prior to 1707, 145 nobles and 160 commoners had gone to Edinburgh for the Parliament and spent their rents among the city's tradespeople. In the new British Parliament, just sixteen peers and forty-five members went to London, where they exerted little political influence. Scotland's lucrative trade with France abruptly ceased.[23] Although the Union legalized the colonial trade, Edinburgh (unlike Glasgow) had no merchant class to profit from it, and so no surplus capital to invest in the securities issued to fund the growing national debt.[24] Grass grew among the market crosses. The Canongate, formerly the home of Edinburgh's nobility, became deserted. Before the Union, the city itself had become accustomed to low taxes and negligent collectors. Now, the Crown levied new impositions on beer, salt, linen, and soap, with the intention of covering part of the cost of the Scottish administration. In Edinburgh, however, many viewed these impositions as tariffs for the Hanoverian's costly Continental wars and national debt. In 1725, Prime Minister Walpole's government imposed an addition tax on malt (increasing the price of ale), further incensing the population.[25] Anti-union feelings and economic and political discontentment coalesced around loyalty to the exiled Stuarts, sparking rebellions in 1715 and 1745.

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[21] Roger Emerson, "The contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment,* ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.
[22] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 19.
[23] Ibid, 20.
[24] Ibid, 22.
[25] Ibid, 20.

A prominent leader of the failed 1715 Jacobite Rising was the influential Earl of Mar, John Erskine, who escaped to France. In the same social circle as Fletcher of Saltoun, Mar also called for expanding Edinburgh in 1728:

> Therefore for the universal good and comodity, all ways of improving [Edinburgh] should be thought of, as in particular making a large bridge of three storys of arches over the low ground betwixt the Norloch and phisick garden from the High Street at Halkerston's wind to the Moultrie hill, where there might be many fine streets built as the inhabitants increast…[26]

In addition to building a bridge across the northern valley, Mar recommended diverting a local river, the Water of Leith, to run through the North Loch to improve sanitation.[27] However, opposition from landowners to the north and the shortage of investment capital prevented these ideas from materializing.[28] Nevertheless, Mar's proposal was to have a significant impact on future plans.

The final Jacobite Rising of 1745 proved to be the catalyst for the redevelopment of Edinburgh. After the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden in 1746, the long-disputed question of the royal succession was settled. With the restoration of the exiled Stuarts no longer a practical possibility, any plotting and planning for that restoration virtually ceased.[29] In retaliation, Parliament passed a series of acts immediately after 1746, which were designed to break up the Scottish clan system and weaken (if not destroy) the power of the Highland chiefs. Highlanders were deprived of their arms, their dress, and the heritable jurisdictions of their chiefs, with Jacobite estates forfeited to the Crown. The resulting political stability in Scotland

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[26] John Erskine, *The Earl of Mar's Legacies to Scotland and to his son, Lord Erskine, 1722-1727*, ed. Stuart Erskine (Edinburgh: 1896), 201, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31175034877699.
[27] Carley et al., *A Model City*, 31.
[28] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 175.
[29] A. J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh: 1750-1840* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), 25-26.

allowed landed "improvers," merchants, and potential investors to "concentrate their attention and energies as never before on economic activities and ambitions."[30] For Edinburgh, the Forty-five and ensuing peace showed that the city's narrow site and cramped walls no longer served even a defensive purpose.[31]

The man who would serve as the driving force behind the building of Edinburgh's New Town was George Drummond, who was first elected Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 1725 and was a staunch supporter of the Union. When Jacobite forces threatened the city in 1745, Provost Drummond raised the First or College Company of the Corps of Volunteers, comprised mostly of young intellectuals and ministers committed to defending the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. In 1746, many of these men came together to form the Revolution Club, whose agenda was "to devise a modern country that would deliver social and commercial benefits to North Britain."[32] They concluded that the best way forward for Scotland was to forget the past by expressing loyalty to the House of Hanover.[33]

In September 1751, a six-story tenement collapsed. The Town Council commissioned a subsequent survey of the buildings, and many were demolished.[34] The following July, the Convention of Royal Burghs met and decided to carry out works of "a public nature…beneficial to the capital of this part of the united kingdom."[35] Thus, a committee was formed to produce a pamphlet to explain and gain support for the plan. Headed by the brilliant politician Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, the committee also included members of the Revolution Club, including Provost

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[30] Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, 26.
[31] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 176.
[32] McKean, "Twinning cities," 44.
[33] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 54.
[34] Ibid, 176.
[35] Elliot, *Proposals*, advertisement.

Drummond, Dr. Alexander Webster, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, John and Robert Adam, David Hume, and Dr. William Robertson.[36] The resulting publication was for practical purposes as important for Scotland as any work from the philosophers in its Continental horizons, commercial sagacity, and historical philosophizing.[37]

Entitled *Proposals for carrying on certain public works in the city of Edinburgh*, the tract began by stressing the importance of a modern capital city to the success of any country:

> Among the several causes to which the prosperity of a nation may be ascribed, the situation, conveniency, and beauty of its capital, are surely not the least considerable. A capital where these circumstances happen fortunately to concur, should naturally become the centre of trade and commerce, of learning and the arts, of politeness, and of refinement of every kind.[38]

Once the capital city is improved, the spirit of industry would permeate every corner of a country. The *Proposals* proceeded by favorably describing London's "healthful, unconfined situation, upon a large plain…the neatness and accommodation of its private houses; the beauty and conveniency of its numerous streets and open squares, of its buildings and bridges, [and] its large parks and extensive walks."[39] Edinburgh, on the other hand, possessed none of these attributes. The pamphlet complained of the city's lack of public buildings, the food markets crowding the dirty streets, and the pestilential North Loch. At a time when cities were valued chiefly for their genteel residents, "To these and such other reasons it must be imputed, that so few people of rank reside in this city; that it is rarely visited by strangers; and that so many local prejudices, and narrow notions, insistent with polished manners and growing wealth, are still so obstinately retained."[40]

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[36] McKean, "Twinning cities," 44-45.
[37] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 176-77.
[38] Elliot, *Proposals*, 5.
[39] Ibid, 6.
[40] Ibid, 8.

"Next, the author considered the modern history of Scotland: the disorder and backwardness of the seventeenth century, the false dawns of the Unions of the Crowns and Parliaments, the stagnation of the first decades of the eighteenth century, the Forty-five."[41] However, "since the year 1746, when the rebellion was suppressed, a most surprising revolution has happened in the affairs of this country. The whole system of our trade, husbandry, and manufactures…began to advance with such a rapid and general progression, as almost exceeds the bounds of probability."[42] As examples, the pamphlet noted an almost 70 percent increase in the value of linen cloth sold in Scotland since 1742, a more than doubling of the shipping tonnage at the port of Leith, and a four-fold increase in the whiskey distilled in Edinburgh since 1745. Also, new public companies had been established for whale- and herring-fishing, sugar, glass, rope and sailcloth, gold and silver lace, and iron and carpentry.[43]

To create a capital city worthy of this new commercial society, the first steps were "To obtain an act of parliament for extending the royalty; to enlarge and beautify the town, by opening new streets to the north and south, removing the markets and shambles, and turning the *North-Loch* into a canal, with walks and terrasses on each side."[44] Significantly for a town that previously had had to finance its own improvements, the pamphlet determined that "the expence of these public works should be defrayed by a national contribution."[45] To sum up:

> A nation cannot at this day be considerable, unless it be opulent. Wealth is only to be obtained by trade and commerce, and these are only carried on to advantage in populous cities. There also we find the chief objects of pleasure and ambition, and there consequently all those will flock whose circumstances can afford it.[46]

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[41] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 177.
[42] Elliot, *Proposals*, 19-20.
[43] Ibid, 20-22.
[44] Ibid, 26.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid, 31.

The author anticipated the fear that with the expansion of the city, the Old Town might become abandoned. But with the proposed construction of a new Exchange and Courts of Justice in the present town, this would not occur, as the professional class would continue to live near these places just as they had done in Turin, Berlin, and elsewhere:

> In these cities, what is called the *new town*, consists of spacious streets and large buildings, which are thinly inhabited, and that too by strangers chiefly, and persons of considerable rank; while the *old town*, though not near so commodious, is more crouded than before these late additions were made.[47]

Once people became concentrated in the capital city, commerce would increase, and money would circulate more rapidly. The result would be "general wealth and prosperity: the number of useful people will increase; the rents of land rise; the public revenue improve; and, in the room of sloth and poverty, will succeed industry and opulence."[48] Thus, the *Proposals* determined that to lure the nobility back to Edinburgh, this New Town would be an aristocratic suburb just for them – a mix of the charming streets and squares found in London with the neoclassical European Renaissance traditions that had inspired Scotland's cultural evolution.[49]

To fund the enterprise, Provost Drummond took advantage of customs revenues from the port of Leith, duties on ale and wine, public loans, voluntary public donations, market fees and rents from tenanted properties, and the seized assets of Jacobite rebels.[50] In the summer of 1753, the City Council obtained from Parliament "An Act for Erecting several Public Buildings in the City of Edinburgh; and to impower the Trustees therein to be mentioned to purchase Lands for that Purpose; and also Widening and Enlarging the Streets of the said City, and certain Avenues

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[47] Elliot, *Proposals*, 32.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Carley et al., *A Model City*, 32.
[50] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 185-86.

leading thereunto."[51] Over the next few years, Drummond and the Town Council concentrated their efforts on the construction of the new Exchange in the Old Town, but progress was slow. By 1759 the Exchange was nearing completion, and Drummond was able to move on to more ambitious schemes. Work on draining the North Loch – as put forward in the *Proposals* – was begun. In 1763, drainage was sufficiently advanced that the Council placed an advertisement calling for submissions for a new way to Leith:

> As it is greatly desired, for the public utility, that a road of communication be made betwixt the high street of Edinburgh, and the adjacent grounds belonging to the city and the other neighbouring fields, as well as to the port of Leith, by building a stone bridge over the east end of the North Loch…this advertisement is publicly given to all who are willing to undertake the said work, to give in plans, elevations, and estimates…[52]

Public subscriptions were organized, and Drummond laid the foundation stone in October. The project once again languished until January 1765 when the Town Council Committee on the Scheme of the Communication with the Fields in the North posted a notice inviting anyone to submit plans for the bridge for a reward of thirty guineas. In July, the committee awarded the prize to Deacon William Mylne (a member of the Council) with alterations by the architect John Adam.[53] The three-arched stone bridge was to cost £10,000 and be more than 1,100 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 70 feet above the valley.[54] It was the largest public work in Europe until the canal-building boom of the late 1760s.[55] Construction began on the North Bridge in October 1765 and proceeded steadily, opening to foot-traffic in 1769. However, on August 3, 1769, a portion of the bridge collapsed, killing five people. With reconstruction, the project eventually cost over

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[51] 26 Geo. 2, c. 36. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.*
[52] "Of the intended enlargement of the city of Edinburgh," *The Scots Magazine* 25, (July 1763): 362, http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/6111572?accountid=12964.
[53] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 193.
[54] Doreen Yarwood, *Robert Adam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 168.
[55] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 191.

£16,000 and was not completed until 1772.[56] Meanwhile, the Town Council put forward a new request for an extension of the city's Royalty in August 1765, which was passed by Parliament in 1767.[57] The draining and bridging of the North Loch and the extension of the city's boundaries to the fields north of the valley – first suggested nearly a century prior and accomplished through the initiative of Provost Drummond – were the crucial events that provided for the birth of the New Town.

In the spring of 1766, with construction of the North Bridge underway and the extension of the Royalty pending before Parliament, the city fathers could actively pursue their ultimate goal of a refined residential suburb. In March, Gilbert Laurie (who had succeeded the elderly George Drummond as Lord Provost) and the Town Council announced that the ground for the new development had been surveyed, and in April called for an architectural competition, inviting anyone to submit plans for this New Town.[58] The concept of holding an open competition for the redevelopment of a city, in which the plan chosen was based on its merit, was an enlightened one. Previously, as was the case in the development of London's Covent Garden in the 1630s and the subsequent rebuilding of the city after the Great Fire, projects were commonly awarded based on patronage. On May 21, 1766, six plans had been submitted for Edinburgh's New Town, and on August 2, the design presented by James Craig had been judged the best by Lord Provost Laurie and John Adam.[59]

James Craig was an unknown, twenty-six-year-old architect, son of an Edinburgh merchant and nephew of the poet James Thomson, author of "Rule, Britannia."[60] In his final plan

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[56] Yarwood, *Robert Adam*, 168.
[57] Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, 301.
[58] Ibid, 70-71.
[59] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 195.
[60] McKean, "Twinning cities," 46.

for the New Town, Craig adorned his design with a cartouche containing an extract from Thomson's *Liberty:*

> AUGUST, around, what PUBLIC WORKS I see!
> Lo! stately Streets, lo! Squares that court the breeze,
> See! long Canals, and deepened Rivers join
> Each part with each, and with the circling Main
> The whole enliven'd Isle.[61]

This poem connected the confidence of neoclassical Georgian England to that of the aspirations of Scotland's capital. Like its great Roman antecedent, Augustan Britain would be imperial, connected, and – above all – *united,* culturally uniform and secured against its Continental enemies.[62] "Craig's plan associated Edinburgh with the public-minded and progressive desires of a modernizing age, and reminded his judges of the benefits brought by the Union of Parliaments in 1707."[63] The map's dedication reinforced this British agenda:

> To His Sacred Majesty GEORGE III, The Munificent Patron of Every POLITE and LIBERAL Art, This PLAN of the New Streets and Squares, intended for His ancient CAPITAL of NORTH-BRITAIN; One of the Happy Consequences of the Peace, Security, and Liberty his People enjoy, under his mild, and auspicious Government, IS, with the utmost Humility Inscribed By His Majesty's Most devoted Servant and Subject, James Craig.[64]

Craig's initial design for New Town further expressed Unionist enthusiasm by taking the form of a Union Jack, with a large central square and streets radiating diagonally outward.[65] However, the sharply triangular blocks of the Union Jack design were unbuildable, contradicted the

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[61] James Craig, *Plan of the New Streets and Squares intended for the City of Edinburgh* (1767), https://www.capitalcollections.org.uk/index.php?a=ViewItem&i=32128&WINID=1481496517255#.WE3i-KIrKu7.
[62] Susan Manning, "Post-Union Scotland and the Scottish Idiom of Britishness," in *Enlightenment, Britain and Empire (1707-1918)*, vol. 2 of *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature,* ed. Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 45.
[63] Ibid, 46.
[64] Craig, *Plan for the City of Edinburgh.*
[65] John Laurie, *A Plan of Edinburgh and Places adjacent* (1766), http://maps.nls.uk/counties/rec/605.

competition's requirement of ordered squares, and extended too far outside the site's boundaries. As a result, the plan was twice sent for refinement to a Council committee that included John Adam and William Mylne (designers of the North Bridge) and Lord Kames (the philosopher and modernizer), with some amendments by Craig himself.[66] [67]

The final plan for New Town, which was officially adopted on July 29, 1767, appeared to the Town Council to exemplify the Enlightenment aesthetic ideals of Francis Hutcheson – namely unity within diversity.[68] In the eighteenth century, an enlightened urban plan was one which was neoclassical – based on the architectural forms that developed in ancient Greece and subsequently in Rome. A neoclassical townscape was simplistic and functional and included features such as a regular grid, rigid street axes with long, unobstructed views, dominant landmarks like churches and other public buildings, and spatial organization utilizing hierarchy.[69] This design was in contrast to the organic, medieval street patterns which had developed over centuries in many European cities. This newly-ordered approach to town planning satisfied the Enlightenment belief that human society, its institutions, and its environment could be improved through the use of logical and empirical thinking.

Craig's 1767 plan satisfied all of these requirements. Its layout was a simple grid of rectangular blocks with three streets running east to west, with cross streets running north to south. The broad, central main street linked two formal garden squares (with a monumental church closing the vista at each end), while the outer two continued, offering stunning views to the south toward Edinburgh Castle and Old Town, and to the north to the Firths of Forth and

[66] McKean, "Twinning cities," 46.
[67] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 195.
[68] McKean, "Twinning cities," 46.
[69] Carley et al., *A Model City*, 14.

Fife. Between them ran two narrow service streets, off of which ran even narrower mews lanes. Continuing its deference to the Hanoverians, the plan's main street was named George Street, in honor of the king, and the two squares were named after the patron saints of the united kingdoms, St Andrew's Square at the east and St George's Square at the west.[70] St George's Square was later renamed Charlotte Square in 1785, in tribute to George III's beloved queen.[71] The two outer streets were named Queen Street and Prince's Street. Linking Scotland and England's national emblems were the renamed back streets of Thistle and Rose Streets, while two north-south roads were designated Frederick (after George III's father) and Hanover Streets (after the royal house). An illustration on the plan indicated that contrary to the densely-packed, multistoried, European-style tenements that characterized the Old Town, the New Town would consist of regularly-windowed, three-storied terraced houses in the English manner.[72] Further, only the main thoroughfare of George Street could be considered urban. The remainder of New Town was fundamentally rural in that the two other principal streets and the cross-streets looked over trees and parkland. It was the epitome of a closed community, only accessible to the Old Town by the new North Bridge at its far eastern end.[73] Finally, Craig's plan solved the inconvenient issue of social mixing plaguing the Old Town (apparently so distasteful to Scottish nobility) by segregating classes by street: the wealthiest in Charlotte and St Andrew's Squares, less grand in Queen Street and Prince's Street, artisans and shopkeepers in the back streets of Thistle and Rose, and the underclasses in mews lanes north and south.[74] This organization of people by rank was entirely consistent with the scientific spirit of the era, exemplifying the

[70] Craig, *Plan for the City of Edinburgh.*
[71] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 196.
[72] Craig, *Plan for the City of Edinburgh.*
[73] McKean, "Twinning cities," 47.
[74] Carley et al., *A Model City,* 149.

fundamental Enlightenment idea of social engineering: the controlled construction of a new civil society free from arbitrary rule. In Edinburgh's New Town, Craig's plan clearly showed how every useful person in this new civil society might be arranged.[75]

As executed, however, the New Town did not adhere to Craig's plan. The city offered building plots for sale beginning in August 1767, but by November 1768 the Town Council had received a disappointing £972 from the sale of lots in the new district. It was reported in July 1769 that houses in St Andrew's Square cost between £1,800 and £2,000 each, with one or two from £4,000 to £5,000.[76] These were large sums for speculative builders, resulting in potential landowners (who had the means to do so) taking the initiative themselves. One of these was the wealthy Parliamentarian Sir Lawrence Dundas, who had made his fortune supplying the Duke of Cumberland's redcoats during the Forty-five. Dundas purchased the prime location in the middle of the east side of St Andrew's Square (which Craig had intended for a church, St Andrew's) and built a magnificent Palladian mansion designed by the prominent architect Sir William Chambers (now home to the Royal Bank of Scotland).[77] Later, Robert and James Adam were prominently engaged in developments in fashionable Charlotte Square. These were very much the exceptions, however. Most of the city's gentry, concerned about the cost of living and entertaining in the modern or "English" style, remained in the Old Town. The exposure of the eastern end of Prince's Street to the busy traffic to and from Leith, the drab, barrack-like appearance of the buildings on George Street, and the relocation of the town's butchers below the North Bridge did not lend a refined impression.[78] Additionally, the collapse of the southern end of the North

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[75] Charles McKean, "The Controlling Urban Code of Enlightenment Scotland," in *Urban Coding and Planning*, ed. Stephen Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2011), 45.
[76] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 197.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 197.

Bridge in 1769 was the opposite of reassuring. As a consequence, the New Town remained largely unbuilt until the 1780s, with the focus of social, business, and intellectual life in Edinburgh remaining in the Old Town until that time.[79] The inconvenience of a single connection to the Old Town only at the east end via the North Bridge led to calls for a new route by the early 1780s. For the sake of frugality, the city constructed an earthen ramp with the dirt excavated from the foundations of the New Town buildings, which was deposited in the former North Loch. Known as the "Earthen Mound," it was finished by the end of the Napoleonic Wars.[80] In 1820, what is known today as the first New Town was finally completed. Contrary to its intentions, it had become predominantly occupied by Scots of the professional classes, who lived in a sophisticated mix of Palladian houses and tenements, sporadically built over decades, which nonetheless often shared a unified frontage.[81] New phases of development continued into the later Georgian and subsequent Victorian eras, allowing for the expansion and growth of the city of Edinburgh. However, in the process of underwriting the New Town scheme, the city more or less bankrupted itself in 1833.[82]

Edinburgh's New Town project had its intellectual roots in the European Renaissance, with Scots frequently traveling to and studying on the Continent and returning with the latest ideas concerning architecture and town planning, based on neoclassicism. With the loss of the royal court to London in 1603, leading Scottish politicians, desirous of a more prosperous commercial future, entered into a Union with England in 1707. This unification left Scotland with its own autonomous educational, ecclesiastical, financial, and legal systems, ensuring the

[79] McKean, "Twinning cities," 50.
[80] Carley et al., *A Model City,* 35.
[81] Ibid, 136-37.
[82] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, 203-4.

preservation of European neoclassical ideas that would continue to develop and eventually flourish during the Enlightenment. However, the economic consequences of the Union were especially harmful in the short term for the capital city of Edinburgh, with much of the Scottish nobility departing for a more comfortable life in London. Building tensions flared into rebellions against Hanoverian authority that were ultimately crushed in 1746, ending the question of royal succession and bringing stability. The advent of peace and the rapid growth of the Scottish economy in the mid-eighteenth century convinced leading Scottish Unionists that their nation's future rested in cooperation with England. Employing the Enlightenment concepts of public improvement and modernization, these men particularly focused their attentions on the medieval city of Edinburgh, whose disordered townscape and overcrowded tenements served as a striking symbol of Scotland's backwardness. Redeveloping the capital, these men professed, would bring commercial benefits to the entire country. Therefore, they devised a scheme to drain the fetid swamp north of the city, bridge the dried valley, and construct an exclusive residential suburb on the adjacent plain to woo the Scottish aristocracy back to Edinburgh. One of the most prominent figures in the enterprise was the long-serving Lord Provost George Drummond, who used his ingenuity and resourcefulness to secure funding and Parliamentary approval for the New Town project. An open competition for the best design for the New Town was won by the young architect James Craig, whose adopted 1767 plan was not only geometric and rational, but explicitly British. Its use of Scottish and English street names fostered the concept of a united, imperial Britain, in which the Scottish nation was presented as an equal and loyal partner. Craig's plan was also neoclassical, utilizing rows of analogous townhouses, as well as hierarchical, categorizing social classes by street, both of which conveyed a sense of order and control. As developed, the New Town primarily did not live up to the lofty goals and aspirations

of its planners. Scottish aristocrats in London did not return to live there, and it became mostly a suburb of the upper-middle and middle classes by the early decades of the nineteenth century. Instead of the planned standardized townhomes, its residents lived mainly in a variety of houses and tenements. Although New Town helped transform Edinburgh into a modern, commercial capital, setting the pattern for its future expansion, funding the project left the city insolvent. Nevertheless, architects and urban planners continue to study its plan in the twenty-first century.

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