

2005 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

The annual meeting and conference of the Marion Dean Ross/Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians was held in Bellingham, Washington October 7-9, 2005. Conference sessions and tours were held on the grounds of Western Washington University and in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The conference was organized around the theme of sustainability, and the sessions featured various aspects of social, cultural, and environmental sustainability in architecture and community planning.

The proceedings began with an informal tour of the Washington State Archives/ Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, which was followed by an afternoon walking tour of the Western Washington University Campus led by Dr. Richard Francis, Professor Emeritus, WWU. With a focus on early campus planning, the tour began on the green facing Old Main (Skilling & Corner, 1896-1899), the site of the normal school in 1899. We continued to Eden's Hall (T.F.Doan, 1921), a magnificent Classic Revival dormitory which once faced destruction but was saved through active preservation efforts. Another stop of interest was Wilson Library (Bebb & Gould, 1928) with its original reading room furnishings and decoration. Throughout the tour, we observed the integration of architecture and the Outdoor Sculpture Collection against a backdrop of the forested Sehome Arboretum. Despite the inclement weather, participants enjoyed the tour, commenting on the unique blend of the natural and built environment. Delegates then had a chance to meet old friends and make new ones at High Tea at the Viking Union.

An evening lecture by architect Johnpaul Jones, FAIA was a conference highlight. Conference attendees were guests of the university at this first event in the 2005-2006 Distinguished Lecturer Series. In his talk, "Stand Inside our Ways and Beliefs," Jones outlined his architectural philosophy and discussed the ways in which American Indian beliefs played an instrumental role in the design and construction of the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC. He recounted that he often heard the phrase, "We want some of us in that building." In response, he visited native peoples in their home communities rather than require that they come to Washington for consultation. With eloquent words and stunning slides Jones demonstrated how he and other designers in this collaborative effort incorporated what had been gleaned from site visits into a showpiece of architecture and an exploration of native history and contemporary life. Overall, the building and exhibition spaces display a strong affinity for the earth and the energy of the building site, as well as a concern for environmental sustainability. Mr. Jones made us aware of the part we all play in the world and emphasized the need to have courage to let our views be known.

Following the lecture, delegates attended the reception for Johnpaul Jones held in the Western Art Gallery. The Gallery's exhibit, "Sustainable Built Environments in the Northwest," was curated by the Northwest Washington American Institute of Architects and featured LEEDS award-winning designs in the Northwest.

Saturday morning paper sessions were held in Old Main Theatre. President Martin Segger welcomed delegates and outlined the upcoming events. Vice-president Linda Smeins introduced the paper sessions moderated by Secretary David Peterson. The diversity and scope of the papers indicated the timeliness of the conference theme.

The presentations were as follows:

Paper session 1, Cultural Sustainability and Native Peoples

Caroline Swope, Ph.D., lecturer, Seattle Central Community College, "Casino Games: created culture & Coast Salish identity"

Giamila Quattrone, architect and Ph.D. candidate, Università degli Studi Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria, "Learning from Aboriginal People: cultural and social appropriateness in the sustainable approach of five Australian contemporary architects"

Andrew Todd, conservator, British Columbia, "Conservation of Totem Poles"

Paper session 2, Nature, Community and Livability

Jerome Wolfe, graduate student, University of British Columbia, "Sehome Hill Arboretum: vision or chimera?"

Derek Simons, lecturer, Ph. D. candidate, Simon Fraser University, "Livability = (Surrealism + Modernism) x (Picture Windows + Concrete)"

Larry E. Johnson, AIA, Seattle, WA, "Architect in Arcadia: Ellsworth Prime Storey and Moran State Park"

Following a box lunch, delegates reconvened for the chapter's annual meeting. The following were elected as Board members for the next two years: Martin Segger: President, Edward Teague: Vice President, Shirley Courtois: Treasurer, David Peterson: Secretary. There was a suggestion to recognize recent published work by members of the chapter. Newsletter editor Helen Edwards noted that these newly published and upcoming works are exactly the kind of material that makes wonderful newsletter items, and she encouraged everyone to send her articles or information. Jeannette Reynolds noted that there are still a few copies of the Chapter history, written by Elisabeth Walton Potter in recognition of the Chapter's 50th anniversary last year. If interested in a copy, contact Jeannette. Martin Segger recognized members of the chapter for their work over the past year, and in turn, chapter members applauded him for his exceptional leadership.

The afternoon bus and walking tour began at the Ridgeway dormitory complex (Fred Bassetti, 1961-1965). Following introductory comments from Grant Hildebrand, Professor Emeritus, University of Washington, delegates walked through the complex, noting how the buildings fit into their natural setting and give privacy to residents. The wildlife statues set throughout the grounds are a special surprise (photo upper

right). Our next stop was the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Built in 1892 as the City Hall by Alfred Lee, the ornate building is a local landmark. Inside, we were privileged to view the exhibition "Victorian Architecture, Gingerbread and Fish-scale Shingles." (See photo, centre right for details.) Richard Vanderway, Curator of Education and Public Programs, welcomed delegates to the exhibit and outlined the history of the building. The next stop was the George Bacon House, designed in 1905 by Henry Bacon, the designer of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC. Christopher Thomas, author of *The Lincoln Memorial and American Life*, spoke briefly about the home and its importance before we began a comprehensive interior tour. The bus then drove through the Eldridge Avenue Historic District with its many meticulously maintained houses. The final stop was the Mt. Baker Theatre (Fox Studios, R.C. Reamer, Architect, 1927) (photo, lower right) that has been restored to its former "Mooresque" glory. Following a concert on the original Wurlitzer organ, we toured the interior. The interior furnishings are opulent, reflecting the importance of the theatre experience in the early twentieth century. The light fixtures and painted wood in the lobby were especially interesting to the delegates.

The dinner banquet at Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant (Elks Building, 1912) provided an opportunity for further discussion of preservation issues. A panel representing local architects, city preservation officials and business leaders addressed questions about the intersection between historic preservation and development in growing communities. Delegates actively participated in lively debate and continued to talk long after the session was finished.

Sunday's tour took us past yet more interesting homes as we made our way to the C.X. Larrabee home (photo, top right). Built in 1915 by Architects Bebb and Gould, the home was designed for entertaining on a grand scale. T. William Booth, co-author of Carl F. Gould, made a short presentation that set the house in context. The home is characterized by luxurious detailing and spectacular mature landscaping. Even the outbuildings were little gems of architectural genius. Our next stop was the Gamwell House (1890-92, Longstaff and Black, architects; see photo lower right). The owners of this carefully restored house shared their experiences in making this a showpiece for the neighbourhood. Notable features include the original stained glass and woodwork. Next on the agenda was "Wardner's Castle" (1890, Kirtland Cutter, architect). Following comments from Henry C. Matthews, author of *Kirtland Cutter, Architect in the Land of Promise*, we toured the property. In this case, its current owners are in the process of restoring the building. The home is beautifully sited with vistas of Puget Sound from the upper storey balconies. We wish the owners well in their efforts to return this home to its former glory.

The session concluded with a walking tour of Fairhaven National Historic District led by John Servais, owner and editor, Fairhaven.com. Because Fairhaven was featured in the Saturday panel discussion, matters of preservation and new growth were taken up again as we saw examples of new condominium projects, early

twentieth century buildings that have been converted to new use, and historic nineteenth-century buildings. We were joined on the tour by a local business owner, who regaled us with stories of early Bellingham and his efforts to preserve its heritage buildings. The discussion of preservation issues continued through lunch at Skylark's. Delegates left for home, full of information and looking forward to next year's conference in Moscow, Idaho.