

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE, PORTLAND, OREGON, OCTOBER 9, 10, 11, 2009

The 2009 Annual Conference of the Marion Dean Ross Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians was held October 9-11, in Portland, Oregon in fall sunshine which showed the city's landmarks to advantage. The Chapter welcomed over sixty conferees and presenters from British Columbia, California, Idaho, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin, including several students from the University of Oregon who attended the session of scholarly papers.

The theme of the conference chaired by president Edward H. Teague was **From Cast Iron to Green Design: A Closer Look at Materials and Craft in the Pacific Northwest**. Paper topics, featured presentations, and walking tours consistently held to the theme of the weekend program to good effect.

The conference chair was supported by committee members Elisabeth Walton Potter, the pre-conference tour organizer, Shirley Courtois, treasurer, and Dave Pinyerd, membership coordinator. Vendors and participating organizations included the University of Oregon in Portland, University of Oregon Libraries, The University Club, Architectural Heritage Center of the Bosco-Milligan Foundation, Architectural Reproductions, Inc., SERA Architects, Hilton Portland, and Elephants Delicatessen.

The conference program and name badges featured photographs of buildings taken by chapter namesake Marion Dean Ross that can be found in the electronic resource, [Building Oregon: Architecture of Oregon & the Pacific Northwest](#).

PRE-CONFERENCE TOURS

Friday afternoon's tour package was launched at the Jacobean-style University Club with a hosted luncheon and tour of the Whitehouse & Fouilhoux-designed private club building of 1913 led by building committee chair, Lewis L. McArthur, editor of *Oregon Geographic Names*. During luncheon, David Talbott, president of Architectural Reproductions, illustrated examples of his firm's work in restoring and replicating building elements for rehabilitation projects. The overview was followed by a tour of the northeast Portland plant where gypsum, cement, polymer-based and glass fiber-reinforced substitute materials are employed along with traditional modeling techniques. The technique for creating a 'run' of plaster cornice molding was demonstrated for the conferees, and examples of computer-generated casting molds were inspected at arm's length.

The tour events concluded with an insider's view of the classically-detailed Palladian Pioneer Courthouse, the region's oldest monumental government building. Designed by Alfred Bult Mullett, Supervising Architect

of the Treasury, the federal courthouse and custom house was completed in 1875. SERA Architects of Portland headed the most recent renovation and seismic upgrade of 2004. Don Eggleston, the firm's principal, and Jim Riley, project architect, led the top-to-bottom tour which included the cupola, restored courtroom, and the basement installation of friction pendulum ground base isolators which reduced the amount of shear-wall structural reinforcement required above the ground story.

OPENING RECEPTION

The conference was formally opened by president Ed Teague at the Architectural Heritage Center, a building arts museum and educational resource center operated by the Bosco-Milligan Foundation in the historic West's Block of 1883 on Southeast Grand Avenue. During the social hour, members had free run of the galleries and viewed the extensive collection of hardware and other exhibits. Appropriate to the conference theme was the current exhibition featuring cast ironwork salvaged from Portland buildings. Foundation director Cathy Galbraith described the work of the foundation and introduced the featured speaker of the evening, William J. Hawkins III, FAIA, who gave a comprehensive overview of Portland's heritage in architectural cast iron. Mr. Hawkins is author of the classic *The Grand Era of Cast-Iron Architecture in Portland* (Portland, 1976).

SCHOLARLY PAPERS

The Saturday morning session of papers was held at the White Stag Block, which is the leased architecture and design facility of the University of Oregon in Portland. The session was dedicated to honorary board member Wendell H. Lovett, FAIA of Seattle, whose generous contributions to the Lovett Scholars Fund since 1996 enabled as many as ten emerging scholars to attend chapter conferences and present their research papers.

The first panel, moderated by Bernadette Niederer, included Diana Painter, whose paper was "Plywood: A Humble Material with an Honorable Past," and Caroline Swope, whose paper was "Engineered Wood for an Engineered World: Robert Billsborough Price and Post-World War II Building Materials." Jeffrey Karl Ochsner's topic was Andris Vanags and "Teaching Furniture Design at the University of Washington, 1989-2009: Craft, Making, and Lessons Toward Sustainability."

The second panel, moderated by David Pinyerd, also fielded questions from the audience at the conclusion of the papers. The presenters were T. William Booth, who titled his paper "Why Did Carl Gould Ask: 'What's the Problem with Concrete?'" His fellow panelists were Thomas C. Hubka, whose paper was titled "Oregon's Common Houses: A Typological Analysis of the Historical Forms of Oregon's Popular Housing;" and Grant Hildebrand, who considered "Gene Zema's Buildings at Ebey's Landing."

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Edward H. Teague presided at the annual meeting of the chapter. The minutes of the 2008 general meeting were approved, and encouraging reports were given by treasurer Shirley Courtois and membership coordinator Jeannette Reynolds. Ken Guzowski, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate of officers for the ensuing two years, as follows: Philip Mead, Moscow, Idaho, president; Diana Painter, Spokane, Washington, vice-president; Bernadette Niederer, Albany, Oregon, secretary; Shirley Courtois, Seattle, Washington, treasurer. Regional delegates nominated were J. Philip Gruen, Pullman, Washington, Harold Kalman, Vancouver, British Columbia, Caroline Swope, Tacoma, Washington, and Ed Teague, Eugene, Oregon. Ed Teague also would continue as Website manager, Dave Pinyerd would assume the roles of membership coordinator and newsletter editor, and Elisabeth Potter would continue as chapter archivist. The slate of officers, delegates and appointees to serve in 2020 and 2011 was approved as presented by acclamation.

Election of officers was followed by a discussion of chapter communications in which it was affirmed that the newsletter will henceforth be issued exclusively in digital form via the Website as a cost-saving measure. Accommodation will be made for members who are not online. Little concern was expressed over the question of including personal contact information in the roster of annual conference registrants. It was decided that member preference on whether to include email addresses in the internal document could be provided via a check-off line in the conference registration form.

The chapter blog, a recent adjunct to the Website, was described by its creator Ed Teague and Elisabeth Potter reported that the University of Oregon Libraries Department of Special Collections and Archives had just completed with her assistance the finding guide for the chapter's archive and placed it online through Northwest Digital Archives, a union list of archival finding aids. The collection presently contains seventy scholarly paper manuscripts listed by author and title.

Martin Segger presented the invitation of colleagues at the University of British Columbia, Kelowna, to hold the 2010 Annual Conference in Kelowna, located in the heart of the Okanagan Valley's wine country. The chapter welcomed the invitation gladly. Among ideas offered for a 2011 conference site, was Mimi Sheridan's proposal of Ebey's Landing in Washington's San Juan Islands.

FEATURED SPEAKER AND WALKING TOUR

After catered lunches at the White Stag Block, the chapter welcomed Art DeMuro president of Venerable Group, Inc., developer of the multi-building renovation project now housing the University of Oregon's Portland presence. Through illustrations, Mr. DeMuro gave a virtual tour of the project which has been acclaimed for its sustainable features and anchoring of a key section of the Skidmore-Old Town Historic

District. Following Mr. DeMuro's presentation, chapter member Bill Hawkins and Dan Haneckow of the Architectural Heritage Center conducted their respective groups on a walking tour of the district noted for its concentration of cast-iron fronted buildings erected from the 1850s through the 1890s. The tour began at the Bickel Block (1883), one of the buildings of the White Stag development project; embraced the New Market Theater (Piper & Burton, 1872), one the city's finest cast iron landmarks, and included a number of building facades reconstructed from cast iron assemblies salvaged during a post-war phase of massive demolition.

AWARDS BANQUET AND FEATURED SPEAKER

The banquet buffet and social hour in the Hilton Hotel's Broadway Suite was a gala affair highlighted by special recognition of retiring officers and award-recipients. Jeannette Reynolds, who had been recognized for her service in absentia during the 2007 conference in Corvallis, was presented with a token of appreciation for her unflagging eight-year-long contributions as membership coordinator and support in producing the semi-annual printed newsletter. Ed Teague was recognized for a triple feat of commitment in serving as president 2007-2009, Website manager, and 2009 Annual Conference organizer. The chapter's 2009 Marion Dean Ross Service Award was presented to a pair of joint recipients: Mirza Dickel and Wallace Huntington for years of SAH leadership at national and regional levels and Miriam Sutermeister and Grant Hildebrand for inspiring the chapter to fulfill its purposes from 1994 onward.

Professor Leland Roth, holder of the Marion Dean Ross Distinguished Chair in Architectural History at the University of Oregon, capped the evening with an invigorating visual overview of architectural and open-space development in Portland's city center.



Images: Left: Grant Hildebrand, Miriam Sutermeister. Right: Mirza Dickel, Wallace Huntington

SUNDAY WALKING TOUR

The final event of the conference was the Sunday morning walking tour of downtown Portland led by former Deputy Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer James Hamrick. The tour highlighted the city's noted collection of early 20th century terra cotta-clad office and retail buildings, banks, and hotels. The tour included modern landmarks ranging from the Equitable Building, Pietro Belluschi's post-war curtain wall skyscraper of 1948 to the post-modern Portland Building of Michael Graves. The tour group experienced three outstanding interiors, those of the Benson Hotel (A. E. Doyle and Associates, 1913), the Elks Temple (Houghtaling & Dougan, 1923), and the Governor (Seward) Hotel of 1909 designed with Secession-flavored motifs by William C. Knighton. To wrap things up, the group repaired to the point of origin for hot chocolate and farewells at the Hilton Hotel.