Society of Architectural Historians

Marion Dean Ross Pacific Northwest Chapter

Newsletter Winter 2009

2007-2009
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Report of the Annual Conference 2008

by Phil Gruen and Caroline Swope

The 2008 annual conference of the Marion Dean Ross/Pacific Northwest Chapter of SAH was held October 2-4 in Tacoma, Washington and welcomed conferees from California, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. More than a dozen cooperating host organizations and agencies opened venues, sponsored tours, and handled logistical details.

The pre-conference excursion was a walking tour of Tacoma's North Slope Historic District. The district, which encompasses more than 1,200 properties, and showcases a number of styles ranging from Victorian and Craftsman to Colonial Revival and Four-square. Several private homes were opened for our members, including the Rhodes mansion. The conference formally opened Thursday evening at the University of Washington with Michael Sullivan, of Artifacts Consulting, speaking on the rejuvenation of Tacoma's warehouse district and the formation of the University of Washington's branch campus in Tacoma. The Tacoma Historical Society opened an exhibit showcasing vintage photos of prominent Tacoma buildings.

Photo by David Pinyerd.

Four houses were open in the North Slope Historic District for conference attendees to tour. The Charles Bartz House (1904), with its unique lozenge-shaped corner bay, was one of those made available for conferees to explore.

The lofty "Castle Hall" of the downtown Tacoma Knights of Pythias Building, designed by Tacoma architect Frederick Heath in 1906, provided a majestic setting for the Friday morning paper session. The seven papers were split into two sessions, organized loosely around the conference theme: "Re-use, Recycling, and Rebirth: Architecture and Preservation in the Pacific Northwest." The expected computer glitches became a boon to the first session of the

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From the President...

The Great Recession appears to be underway, as I write, and many institutions are cutting budgets and envisioning survival strategies. The Oregon Historical Society is a recent victim of the economic downturn, and the continued viability of its research library, used by so many of us, is now in jeopardy. So much has changed since October 2008 when our chapter met in Tacoma, Washington, for our annual meeting. Our gratitude again goes to Caroline Swope & Philip Gruen for generously volunteering their time to develop an enjoyable and memorable event.

We hope that our next conference will also prove to be a valuable learning experience when we gather in Portland, Oregon, October 9-11, 2009. With Elisabeth Potter's sage advice, I am planning a meeting that, in view of our economic situation, might be downsized from past experience, but still substantive and mindful that Oregon's Sesquicentennial Year deserves some celebration. The Call for Papers has already been announced on several discussion lists and the theme, "From Cast Iron to Green Design: A Closer Look at Materials and Craft in Pacific Northwest Architecture" is generating a lot of interest. What is particularly exciting about Portland, a city noted for sustainability, is the confluence of old and new building technologies. The iconic armories, warehouses, and office buildings of the early 20th century have been transformed into 'green buildings' and many sport eco-roofs and other sustainable features. The terra cotta masterpiece, the Meier & Frank Building, now houses a luxury hotel on its upper floors. Our primary meeting venue will be the suite of buildings called White Stag, an historic ensemble transformed with significant green design features to house the University of Oregon's Portland programs. Historians have before them an increasingly expanding suite of building typologies to research. We certainly have the expertise in our chapter to generate some good presentations.

Because of generous donors and sound financial management, the Marion Dean Ross/Pacific Northwest Chapter will not unduly suffer during the recession. Still, our chapter's survival strategy must include increasing our membership. How to lure into our membership the iPhone and iPod generation is something we must consider. We also need the continued commitment of dedicated volunteers to keep the organization viable and moving onward. This year is the biennial election year for the chapter, and the Nominating Committee of Phil Gruen, Harold Kalman, and Ken Guzowski will be pleased to hear of your interest in serving our membership.

See you in Portland!

Ed Teague, SAHMDR President
Head, Architecture & Allied Arts Library
University of Oregon , Eugene

Applications Accepted for Wendell Lovett Award

Each year the chapter recognizes a young scholar – graduate or undergraduate student or early career professional – who wishes to present a scholarly paper at the annual conference. Young scholars who require financial assistance to attend the meeting may apply for a small grant from the Wendell Lovett Fund. When submitting an abstract to the paper session coordinator (see "Call for Papers" in this issue), please include a statement of intent and need, and indicate you are requesting assistance from the Wendell Lovett Fund. The award covers all events of the annual conference – registration, meals, tours – which the recipient is required to attend. Some travel and lodging expenses may be reimbursed.

CALL FOR PAPERS

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS
MARION DEAN ROSS/PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER

PORTLAND, OREGON, OCTOBER 9-11, 2009

Abstracts or proposals for formal papers or work-in-progress reports are solicited for the 2009 annual meeting of the Marion Dean Ross/Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians. This year's meeting will be held in Portland, Oregon, October 9-11, 2009.

Proposals are encouraged that address the conference theme: **"FROM CAST IRON TO GREEN DESIGN: A CLOSER LOOK AT MATERIALS AND CRAFT IN PACIFIC NORTHWEST ARCHITECTURE."** However, all abstracts adhering to the submission guidelines listed below will be given a fair assessment. Submissions may address any aspect of the built environment from any time period or place. This includes everything from house museums to high-rises, indigenous landscapes to industrial development, stadiums to sprawl, preservation to the public sphere.

Graduate students and advanced undergraduates in fields related to the built environment are particularly welcome to present at the conference, as the chapter wishes to highlight new scholarship and approaches from emerging scholars. Membership in the Marion Dean Ross/Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians is not required for abstract submission, although everyone chosen for presentation will be asked to contribute chapter dues for the current year. Students in need of financial assistance to attend the conference may apply for a stipend from the Wendell Lovett Fund. Please attach a statement of need, not to exceed 150 words, on a separate piece of paper when submitting the abstract.

Submission Guidelines: The abstract should be no more than 500 words, and must fit onto a single-sided page. On a separate single page, include the author's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address with a brief, one-paragraph biography or one-page curriculum vitae. Abstracts are **due on or before April 30, 2009**, and authors of papers chosen for presentation will be notified by June 1, 2009. Registration fees apply.

Please indicate in your abstract whether you intend to deliver a formal twenty-minute paper or a ten-minute work-in-progress report. Either way, proposals should reveal scholarship that promises an original contribution to the history of the built environment. Ultimately, the papers or work-in-progress reports delivered at the conference must be analytical or critical in nature, rather than descriptive.

Completed manuscripts of accepted papers must be submitted in full to conference organizers by August 1, 2009. Authors shall retain copyright, but shall agree that the paper will be deposited for scholarly use in the chapter archive.

Electronic submission of proposals is preferred. Please email submissions as Microsoft Word attachments on or before April 30, 2009, to Ed Teague at ehteague@uoregon.edu. If you are unable to send your submission as an electronic attachment, please send it via regular mail to Mr. Teague.

Visit the chapter website, **www.sahmdr.org,** for more information about the Marion Dean Ross chapter including reports of past conferences and paper sessions.

Ed Teague, Conference Chair
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program: speakers responded to audience questions immediately after their talks, while session organizers scrambled to ready the next presentation.

Anne Marshall opened the first session with a report about a preliminary study, conducted with her students, questioning whether the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* has heeded John Maass's 1969 call for wider, more contextual, and more interdisciplinary research. Her paper, "How Has Scholarship in JSAH Changed in the Last Forty Years," demonstrated that scholarship has indeed become less exclusive, but not across-the-board in all of Maass's original criteria. Elena Napolitano followed with a paper entitled "Envisioning 'French Rome' in the Seventeenth Century: Israël Silvestre and the Panorama di Roma dal Pincio." She argued that Silvestre's representation viewed Rome from a French perspective, coinciding with France's political interventions into Rome's Baroque urban fabric. Michael Houser's paper, "Day Walter Hillborn: Built to Last" focused on a mid-twentieth-century local architect from Vancouver, Washington. Hauser's research uncovered more than 700 documented Hillborn designs from 1927-1960, some of which have inspired local pride, yet Day Hillborn remains largely overlooked in Washington's architectural history. Jeffrey Ochsner concluded the first session with "Origins and Development of Victor Steinbrueck's Seattle Cityscape (1962)." By examining a series of original sketches later chosen for that book, Ochsner showed how Steinbrueck intentionally chose non-monumental settings which best characterized his personal experience of the city—an experience that illuminated Seattle's humanity in the face of rapid technological change.

Photo by Caroline Swope.

From left to right, Michael Houser and Brett Santhuff listen to Marian Widmeyer talk about the history of her house.

Following a short break, the second session featured three papers, all of which dealt with issues regarding the built environment of the intermountain Northwest. Wendy McClure began with a close look at three former mining towns––Park City, Utah; Kellogg, Idaho; and Telluride, Colorado—and questioned the design guidelines that have governed their redevelopment. McClure's paper, "Negotiating Cultural Sustainability in the Adaptive Use of Three Historic Mining Towns," demonstrated that Telluride's morphologically-based guidelines, among her three case studies, have been most comprehensive in retaining the patterns of an earlier mining-era legacy. Phillip Mead also examined an intermountain Northwest town long transformed into a site for tourism and recreation in "The Transitional Role of Environmental Health Spa Planning in the Rebirth of Ketchum/Sun Valley, Idaho." With an investigation of early promotional materials to the resort, Mead argued that the Sun Valley's planning and architecture drew upon nineteenth-century medical theories and sold itself as a place of health and well-being. Miranda Anderson's paper, "AgCulture: The Future of Ag-industrial Sites in the Pacific Northwest," directed audience members' attention to the value of grain elevators, warehouses, and silos in the historic fabric and cultural memory of the rural Northwest. Anderson spoke to their potential for preservation rather than demolition or abandonment, and thus her talk provided a fitting conclusion for a conference oriented around recycling, re-use, and rebirth in the Pacific Northwest.

The afternoon was spent examining two of Tacoma's highest profile preservation projects, the University of Washington's Tacoma campus and Stadium High School. The UWT tour was hosted by Sian Roberts of the Miller-Hull Partnership. Miller-Hull was one of several organizations that worked on the Cherry-Parkes Building and the Mattress Factory, an amazing adaptive reuse and rehabilitation project that is the University's first certified LEED silver project. The gritty urban nature of this project contrasted sharply with Stadium High School. Stadium High, originally built as a French Renaissance Revival luxury hotel by the Northern Pacific Railroad is a striking building that dominates Tacoma's skyline. The building went through a massive two year renovation in 2004.

Photo by Michael Houser.

An inside tour of the grand Stadium High School (1891) and its two-year, $80 million renovation was a highlight of Saturday's tour.

The keynote banquet was held at the sleek and newly renovated Hotel Murano. Rueben McKnight, Tacoma's Historic Preservation Officer, addressed some of Tacoma's greatest preservation challenges and triumphs of the past decade.

The next day attendees traveled farther afield and visited the modernist Widmeyer residence in Fircrest and Weyerhaeuser corporate headquarters in Federal Way. Docomomo-WEWA was instrumental in providing access to the Widmeyer residence, a fantastic jewelry-box of a house that was showcased in the 1958 edition of *Pacific Architect and Builder.* The final site visit, Weyerhaeuser, was an unprecedented look through the SOM designed corporate headquarters, complete with terraced vine covered balconies and stunning vistas. This project was awarded the AIA's "Twenty-Five Year Award" in 2001.

Photo by David Pinyerd.

An outside view looking in at the Weyerhaeuser Headquarters, designed by SOM in 1971. This hallway runs the length of the building and is 527 feet long.

Notes from the Secretariat...

At the 2008 General and Board meetings in Tacoma we established that we're doing good things, such as aiding in the publication of *A Greek Temple in French Prairie* by Grant Hildebrand and Miriam Sutermeiser and the creation of the *Building Oregon* website http://boundless.uoregon.edu/digcol/archpnw/index.html. We're consistently financially stable. We've got great members with a range of interests and research topics who supply us with thought provoking presentations and are also fun to hang out with at annual meetings. We're moving into the future. This will be one of our last paper newsletters. Future issues will be e-mailed to members, and will of course also be available at our website. (Those that still wish to receive a paper newsletter can request one from Jeannette Reynolds via the return address on the back cover.) We've also set up a blog http://sahmdr.wordpress.com/ to keep up with the kids.

So, where do we go from here? Like most non-profit organizations, we've got a core of dedicated people who are over-committed, stretched-thin, and would enjoy some help.

Starting with the easy bits: Tell us what you'd like to see in our newsletter, blog, website, and annual meetings! Do you want us to be formal and business-like, or chatty and fun, or both? What kinds of articles? If our blog had a weekly random question that's at least loosely architectural in nature, would you be inclined to visit or comment? Where should we go for our annual meetings? How far are you willing to travel, urban or rural, plush or rugged?

Getting a little more labor intensive: We need content for our newsletter, blog, and annual meetings. What interests you? What are you working on or researching? Read any good books or see any good movies about architecture? Do you have students looking for an outlet to present their work? There are few crowds more supportive of new presenters than the Marion Dean Ross Chapter of the SAH (and I speak from experience).

Here's a big one: Though we're on track for meeting in Portland in 2009, and in Kelowna, B.C. in 2010, we'd love to be able to meet in Spokane or Walla Walla in 2011, but we don't have an on-site organizer. Do you have contacts in Eastern Washington or Western Idaho? Or, do you want us to meet in your town? If you've got the energy, we can provide lots of support for planning!

Got something to say? Drop me a line at niederer@hp-nw.com. Oh, and check out my trial random question at: http://sahmdr.wordpress.com/.

Membership in the Marion Dean Ross Chapter

Membership in the Chapter is open to everyone, regardless of profession or expertise, who is interested in the study, interpretation, and protection of historically significant buildings, sites, and cities. Membership in the parent Society of Architectural Historians is not required.

Membership is based on the calendar year – January through December. Existing members receive renewal notices with the Winter Newsletter. The number that appears after your name on the mailing label indicates the year through which dues have been paid. Please be sure to renew your membership when you receive a renewal notice.

New members are always welcome! A membership form is available on our website for both new and renewing members at www.sahmdr.org

If you have questions regarding your membership status, please contact our Membership Coordinator, Jeannette Reynolds, at jrey50@yahoo.com.

Mirza Dickel Honored

Design magazine *Portland Spaces* honored Mirza Dickel, past president of our Marion Dean Ross chapter, at the Portland Art Museum, November 12, 2008. Master Interior Architect Mirza Dickel was recognized at the 2008 *Portland Spaces* "Root Awards" for her lifetime of achievements.

Portland Spaces sponsored a video on Mirza which is viewable at:

http://www.portlandspaces.net/blog/the-design-district/2008/12/11/masters-video-mirza-dickel

From the website: a University of Oregon graduate, Dickel worked with architects such as Pietro Belluschi, John Yeon, John Storrs, Walter Gordon, and Gil Davis to carve out a Modernism unique to the Northwest. She has done interiors for scores of Portland's venerable families over the years and has only recently retired at age 84.

Chapter members will be interested to know that the Seattle Art Museum has scheduled a field trip to French Prairie, Oregon, to tour Mirza Dickel and Wallace Huntington's Case house and garden on March 14, 2009. Our chapter newsletter (Winter 2008) featured a review of the book *A Greek Temple in French Prairie: The Willam Case House, French Prairie, Oregon 1858-59*, by chapter members Miriam Sutermeister and Grant Hildebrand.

Thank You!

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to the following individuals who made donations to the chapter during 2008:

T. William Booth
Emily Carter
Mirza Dickel
Jerry and Gunilla Finrow
William J. Hawkins, III
Edward H. Teague

Gifts in honor of Philip Dole:

Karin Murr Link
Gary Moye

Members are reminded that the chapter is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) organization, and gifts to the chapter are fully tax deductible as permitted by law.

Book News from Members

Grant Hildebrand has been developing a manuscript on Seattle architect George Suyama, along with a companion volume on Mr. Suyama's mentor, Gene Zema. Accomplished practitioners of the Northwest Style, both architects are little known but produced works of exceptional quality.

Grant has known both men for forty years and both manuscripts are now nearing completion. He intends to submit both to UW Press by June 30, 2009, and hopes that the two books may be published simultaneously as a matched pair.

The view from architect's George Suyama's own residence. One of many photos provided in Grant Hildebrand's soon-to-be-published book on the architect.

Society of
Architectural
Historians

Marion Dean Ross
Pacific Northwest Chapter

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Looking Ahead . . .

Looking forward to seeing you at the annual conference in Portland, Oregon on October 9-11, 2009.

Upcoming Event . . .

National SAH conference
Pasadena, California
April 1-5, 2009

Visit www.sah.org for further details.

Now Here . . .

Check out our updated website at www.sahmdr.org.