

NOUVELLES / NEWS

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE IN CANADA
SOCIÉTÉ POUR L'ÉTUDE DE L'ARCHITECTURE AU CANADA

TOME/VOL. 1, No. 5 SEPT./OCT. 1975

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A History of the Society

In February of 1973, Ms. Jane Fawcett wrote asking if I was interested in forming a Victorian Society in Canada. Feeling that a Victorian Society was inappropriate in the context of Canadian architectural history, I began forming the broader organization that was to become known as the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada.

In October 1973, a Steering Committee of 15 people met in Ottawa to formulate by-laws for the organization. At this time an interim Board of Directors was appointed.

The first meeting of the interim Board took place at Stanley House in June, thanks to a grant from the Canadian Committee for UNESCO. It was decided that SSAC should be more active than most learned societies.

To further this end, eight standing committees were formed, including the Archives, Photography, Communications, Preservation, Membership and Finance Committees.

In October, 1974, the Society was officially incorporated and tax deductible status was received in November. During that same autumn, application was made to the Humanities Research Council to become a Learned Society. An application was also made to the Canadian Committee for UNESCO for funds to underwrite the printing and mailing costs of a newsletter. Thanks to the granting of these funds a newsletter was established, initially edited by Grant Head, Department of Geography, Wilfred Laurier University and Vianney Deschenes, University of Laval.

The major event of 1975 was the annual meeting, held in Edmonton with the Learned

Societies in June. The meeting, organized by Claude Bergeron, General Chairman: John Nicks, Local Chairman, Edmonton, and Michael McMordie, Local Chairman, Calgary, consisted of papers and tours related to the theme of the meeting, Ethnic Architecture on the Prairies. It was an outstanding success.

The second annual meeting of the Society will be held at Laval University from May 25 to May 30, 1975.

Future plans for the Society include a travelling exhibit of architectural drawings and the preparation of scholarly monographs on architecture by the Communications Committee and the establishment of a national collecting policy of archival material by the Archives Committee.

It is hoped that the growth of the Society to date will continue and that its future activities will become increasingly varied and effective.

Martin Eli Weil



SSAC 1976 ANNUAL MEETING

The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada will hold its second Annual Meeting with the Learned Societies at Laval University in Quebec City from May 25 to May 30, 1976. The topic will be Architecture in Canada 1885-1914. Members who would like to present papers on architecture, engineering, town planning, landscape architecture or interior design for this period should contact the General Chairman, Claude Bergeron, Department of History, Laval University, Quebec, P.Q.

DEUXIEME CONGRES ANNUEL

La Société Pour L'Etude de L'Architecture au Canada tiendra son deuxième congrès annuel à l'Université Laval de Québec du 25 au 30 mai 1976.

Les membres qui aimeraient présenter un exposé sur l'architecture, le génie, la planification urbaine, l'architecture paysagiste ou la décoration intérieure doivent communiquer avec le président général, M. Claude Bergeron, département d'histoire, l'université Laval, Québec 10.

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SSAC 1977 ANNUAL MEETING

The 1977 Annual Meeting will be held with the Learned Societies at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B., in the spring of 1977. The topic for the meeting will be Transportation Architecture in Canada. There will be no date limitation for the topic.

TROISIEME CONGRES ANNUEL

Printemps 1977

l'université de Nouveau-Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B.

Chinese Adaption to Canadian Architecture
in the Prairies

The Chinese, over the last few thousand years, have developed a distinctive architecture of their own. Like the architecture of any other country, it reflects not only its national structural styles, but also its history, culture, custom and beliefs of the people.

The formation of prairie Chinatowns around the turn of the century was a result of the larger socio-economic conditions, as well as the adaptation of the Chinese cultural way of life. Over the years, the Chinatowns have developed a personality of their own, reflecting the localized social phenomenon and historical traditions.

The conversion of the Canadian buildings into many uses, such as laundries, groceries, restaurants, gift shops, rooming houses and residences are indicative of the Chinese economic adaption to the realities of Canadian life. In the process of architectural modification, the Chinese also incorporated their cultural elements and folk beliefs into the Western structure. The design and colours, the sense of balance and symmetry, the choices of locations and the interior decors are reflective of Chinese customary traditions.

However, with urban change and modernization, the prairie Chinatowns are under pressure for relocation. This poses a dilemma for the urban planners as to whether on the one hand, to preserve an ethnic community with a set of social institutions of its own, or to improve the facilities and environment of downtown. The continued debate on the Chinatown issue and architectural problems will indicate the long range government policies of ethnic pluralism and Canadian multiculturalism.

The paper examines the human perspective of urban planning, the ecological configurations of Chinatowns, and the architectural renovation by the Chinese. It is substantiated by the data derived from a detailed survey of two prairie Chinatowns, and with clear photographic documentation of Chinese-Canadian architecture.

Ban Seng Hoe, Ph.D.
Museum of Man
Ottawa

Stanley Mission is a large Anglican church located on a promontory that protrudes into the Churchill River. It was constructed between 1852 and 1856 by the Church Missionary Society and is believed to be the oldest building in Saskatchewan.

The Churchill River was a main artery in the fur trade and the Reverend Hunt erected the church at the start of a series of rapids where Indians congregated prior to the trapping season. There was good fishing and it seemed an ideal base to spread Christianity to the indigenous Crees. In addition to the church, he and others constructed two stores and a residential school.

The church is very substantial by western standards with the apex of the roof forty feet above the nave floor. It has a nave, two aisles separated by arcades, choir and sanctuary, and a choir room under the tower. It appears that the building was designed by an architect of competence and constructed by skilled craftsmen.

The main framework is of 8x10in. plates from which rise 8x8in. columns, all constructed to exact size. This framework is covered by either shiplap or cladding and is connected at the junctions with cast iron straps. The floor system rested on outcrops of rock and was made from 8in. diameter logs. The glass windows are of a high standard and could only have been made in a specialist millwork shop. The arches of the nave and the altar rail were imported -probably from England via Hudson Bay on Yorke Boat.

The character of the church is Gothic Revival though the arches have expanded vouhours that appear to be a nineteenth century addition. Church Gothic architecture was based on building in stone, though Stanley Mission is a wood building. There is a good standard of adaptation and detailing throughout.

Good architecture is characterized by a combination of composition, proportions, sympathetic materials, detailing, relationship of solid to void and progression and recession of surfaces. Stanley Mission has many of these characteristics and is a remarkable work of architecture in a fine setting.

--Tom White, Architect, Regina.

The Folk Architecture of Bird Houses in Canada

Bird houses qualify as one of the most interesting yet unexplored manifestations of architectural form. As cultural artifacts, they serve as an introduction to a wide spectrum of human thought, attitudes of style and technical detail, but also represent one of modern man's few remaining productive links with the world of animal wildlife.

This bond with nature has often supplied man with a major stimulant for creative activity. From the bronze animal vessels of ancient China to the porcelain figures of today, animal life--and birds in particular--have been popular subjects. Unlike the treasured antique or priceless work of fine art, however, the bird house seldom seeks to endure, or to be prized, except perhaps by its owner. It is significant too that the bird house is not a cage, not a trap to ensnare or hold captive its occupants. A man-made outdoor dwelling (rather than an indoor cage) for wild and free-flying birds, the bird house reflects our own human yearnings to be "free as a bird".

The bird house is closely related to a universal body of lore in which birds themselves serve as messengers of the gods, appear as the souls of the departed and, in general, enjoy human capabilities and, at times, even superhuman powers. In our own country which is so utterly a part of the "true north" the bird house tends to underline the welcome we extend to the singing harbingers of spring, of warmth, and of the summer sun.

The bird house is often a miniaturized version of architectural construct-types which surround the maker in everyday life. These types serve as the obvious basis for the formulation of bird house typology which would have to take into consideration bird house designs ranging from miniature ranch-style bungalows to multi-storied high rises, grain elevators, barns, lighthouses, mines, steeple-topped churches, and so on.

Besides its primary function as a nest box for birds, a true bird house always strives to be visually attractive. The final product is meant to be seen and appreciated by man and bird alike; and for both it is assumed that the bird house in its finished form should be eye-catching, pleasing, intriguing and, in its own special way, distinctive.

As far as bird houses themselves are concerned, two recent developments are of special interest: the production of unique bird houses of bark and leather trim made by our native Indian craftsmen and sold in boutiques and gift stores from

coast to coast, and the importation of commercial and mass-produced bird houses from Taiwan. Both varieties enrich the assortment of bird houses already found in Canada and attest to their continuing popularity today.

Slides were shown to illustrate bird houses in situ and selected specimens from the collections of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa.

Robert B. Klymasz
Museum of Man
Ottawa

1975 CONGRES ANNUEL RESUMES

L'adaptation chinoise à l'architecture canadienne dans les prairies

Les Chinois ont, au cours des siècles derniers, élaboré une architecture distincte authentique. Comme l'architecture de n'importe quel autre pays, elle est le reflet non seulement de ses styles nationaux, mais aussi de son histoire, de la culture, des coutumes et des croyances populaires.

Autant que l'adaptation du mode de vie des Chinois, la formation des Chinatowns dans les prairies au tournant du siècle fut le résultat de conditions socio-économiques plus vastes. Au cours des années, les Chinatowns ont développé un caractère qui leur est propre, reflétant le phénomène social local et les traditions historiques.

La conversion des édifices canadiens à des fins multiples, telles que buanderies, épicerie, restaurants, boutiques, pensions et résidences démontrent l'adaptation économique des Chinois aux réalités de la vie canadienne. Dans ces transformations architecturales, les Chinois ont aussi incorporé leurs éléments culturels et leurs croyances populaires dans le cadre occidental. Le dessin et les couleurs, le sens de l'équilibre et de la symétrie, le choix de l'emplacement et la décoration intérieure sont le reflet des traditions chinoises.

Cependant, les transformations urbaines et la modernisation ont forcé le déplacement des Chinatowns dans les prairies. Cela place les urbanistes devant le dilemme suivant. Doivent-ils préserver une communauté ethnique avec son ensemble d'institutions sociales, ou est-il préférable d'améliorer les services et l'environnement du centre-ville? Le débat soutenu sur la rénovation de la Chinatown et sur les problèmes architecturaux indiquera la politique à long terme des gouvernements à l'égard du pluralisme ethnique et du multiculturalisme canadien.

Cet exposé examine l'aspect humain de

l'urbanisme, les configurations écologiques des Chinatowns et la rénovation architecturale entreprise par les Chinois. Il s'appuie sur les résultats d'une enquête minutieuse menée dans deux Chinatowns des prairies et il est illustré par une documentation visuelle de l'architecture chinoise au Canada.

Ban Seng Hoe, Ph. D.
Musée de l'homme
Ottawa

L'église de Stanley Mission

L'église de Stanley Mission est une grande église anglicane construite sur un promontoire qui s'avance dans la rivière Churchill. Elle fut érigée entre 1852 et 1856 par la Church Missionary Society et l'on pense qu'elle est le plus vieil édifice de la Saskatchewan.

La rivière Churchill était une voie principale pour le commerce de la fourrure et le Révérend Hunt érigea son église au départ d'une série de rapides où les Indiens avaient l'habitude de se rassembler avant la saison de la chasse. La pêche était bonne et ce semblait être une base idéale pour répandre le christianisme parmi les Cris. En plus de l'église, le Révérend Hunt et d'autres avec lui ont construit deux magasins et un pensionnat.

L'église est une très grosse construction pour l'ouest canadien de cette époque. Le faite de la toiture se situe à quarante pieds au-dessus de plancher de la nef. Elle comporte une nef centrale flanquée de deux nefs latérales séparées par une arcade, une chœur et un sanctuaire ainsi qu'une galerie pour la chorale logée sous la tour. La qualité de sa construction indique bien qu'elle fut dessinée par un architecte compétent et bâtie par des artisans expérimentés.

La charpente principale consiste de sablières de 8" x 8", toutes de dimensions exactes. Cette structure est recouverte de planche à clin liée aux joints par des attaches en fonte. Le plancher repose sur des affleurements de rocher et est construit de billots de 8 pouces de diamètre. Les fenêtres ainsi que leurs vitraux sont d'une grande qualité et ne peuvent avoir été produits qu'avec une machinerie spécialisée. Les arches de la nef et la balustrade ont été importées. Une tradition rapporte qu'elles furent transportées par bateau (Yorke Boat) depuis la Baie d'Hudson et l'Angleterre.

C'est une église de style néo-gothique bien que les arches aient des "vouchours" élargis qui semblent être une adaptation du XIXe siècle.

Le style gothique en architecture religieuse procède de la construction en pierre, tandis que l'église de Stanley Mission est

une construction en bois. Toutefois l'adaptation à ce matériau de même que les détails architecturaux sont une belle réussite.

Une bonne architecture se caractérise par un mariage de la composition, des proportions, de matériaux harmonisés, de détails, de rapports de pleins et de vides ainsi que de saillies et de reculs des surfaces. L'église de Stanley Mission comporte plusieurs de ces caractéristiques et c'est une oeuvre d'architecture remarquable située dans un bel environnement.

Tom White
architecte
Regina

L'architecture populaire des cabanes d'oiseaux au Canada

Les cabanes d'oiseaux se classent parmi les manifestations architecturales les plus intéressantes qui n'aient pas encore été explorées. En tant qu'objets culturels, elles servent d'introduction à un vaste spectre de pensée, d'attitudes et de comportement humains. Non seulement la cabane d'oiseaux se présente-t-elle comme le reflet d'un riche amalgame de style et de détail technique, mais elle est aussi un des rares contacts que l'activité productrice de l'homme entretient encore avec la vie de l'animal non domestiqué.

Ce contact avec la nature a souvent fourni à l'homme un stimulant majeur pour son activité créatrice. Depuis les vaisseaux de forme animale en bronze de la Chine ancienne jusqu'aux figurines en porcelaine du XXe siècle, la vie animale--et en particulier les oiseaux--a été un sujet populaire. A l'encontre des objets d'antiquité soigneusement conservés ou des oeuvres d'art de valeur inestimable, la cabane d'oiseaux est rarement conçue pour durer, ou pour être prisee, sauf peut-être par son propriétaire. Il est également révélateur que la cabane d'oiseaux n'est pas une cage, c'est-à-dire un piège pour attraper ou tenir captifs ses occupants. Conçue par l'homme comme une habitation extérieure (plutôt qu'une cage intérieure) pour des oiseaux sauvages et libres, la cabane d'oiseaux est le reflet de l'aspiration de l'homme à être "libre comme un oiseau".

La cabane d'oiseaux est étroitement liée à un savoir universel où les oiseaux sont les messagers des dieux, apparaissent comme l'âme des défunts et, en général, sont dotés de puissance humaine et, parfois même, de pouvoirs surhumains. Dans notre propre pays qui si absolument une partie

du nord authentique ("true north") la cabane d'oiseaux cherche à souligner la bienvenue que nous souhaitons aux pré-courseurs chantants du printemps, de la chaleur et du soleil de l'été.

La cabane d'oiseaux est souvent en miniature une version de types de constructions architecturales qui entourent son constructeur dans la vie de tous les jours. De toute évidence, ces types servent de base pour établir la typologie de la cabane d'oiseaux qui va comprendre des dessins comme les bungalows de type ranch, les gratte-ciel, les silos à grain, les granges, les phares, les mines, les églises couronnées d'un clocher et ainsi de suite.

En plus de sa fonction première qui est de servir d'abri aux oiseaux, une cabane d'oiseaux authentique s'efforce toujours d'être attrayante visuellement. Le produit final est conçu pour être vu et apprécié par l'homme autant que par l'oiseau; et pour l'un comme pour l'autre il est admis que la cabane d'oiseaux dans sa forme finale devrait être séduisante, plaisante et intrigante et, selon une manière bien à elle, distincte.

Deux développements récents de la cabane d'oiseaux méritent de retenir notre attention: la production de cabanes uniques en écorces avec une décoration en cuir faites par nos artisans indiens et vendues dans les boutiques de cadeaux d'un océan à l'autre, et l'importation de cabanes d'oiseaux fabriquées en série à Taiwan. Ces deux versions enrichissent l'assortiment de cabanes d'oiseaux que l'on trouve déjà au Canada et elles témoignent de leur popularité soutenue jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

Cet exposé est suivi d'une présentation de diapositives qui font voir des cabanes d'oiseaux in situ et des exemples choisis dans les collections du Musée national de l'homme à Ottawa.

Robert B. Klymasz
Musée de l'homme
Ottawa

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCES

Manitoba

A Course In Canadian Architecture Arrives at the University of Manitoba

A course titled Canadian Architecture (No. 50.613) started this September in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba. It is being given by the Graduate Department of Architecture under the direction of K.C.

Lye. Professor William P. Thompson is guiding the course and is assembling a series of articles as the basic reading rather than using one textbook.

With Alan Gowan's Building Canada (1966) now in the out-of-print bin, teachers of courses in Canadian architecture await the Oxford Press publication on the history of Canadian architecture under the editorship of Douglas Richardson.

The direction of the course otherwise will be to look at the traditions of Canadian architecture in the development of the approach to building by designer, patron and builder. The course is given primarily for students in the design disciplines; for this reason, the bases of design achievement and the social role of the architect will be prime foci.

Winnipeg's Warehouse District Under Study

After the preparation of a study by the City of Winnipeg Planning Department on the feasibility of a 'gastown-like' revitalization of the area north and west of Portage and Main, the warehouse district of Winnipeg built in the period 1884-1915 has been a subject of considerable discussion.

A study completed this year by the architectural and planning firm of Damas and Smith, Ltd., Wpg.,

A study completed this year for CMHC by the Winnipeg architectural and planning firm of Damas and Smith grew out of a 1972-3 effort to discover the feasibility of adapting the Galt Warehouse to mixed commercial and residential use. In addition, Heritage Canada is considering the possibility of providing funding for a portion of the warehouse district under its program to aid in the establishment of heritage conservation areas. If CMHC agree to financing mixed-use of the buildings, Winnipeg can come closer to city council's stated aim of providing more adequate housing in the inner city area and at the same time revitalize the Albert Street, McDermot Street area as a unique commercial district in conserved and protected heritage structures.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

VANCOUVER

Actors Re-Fire Old Fire Hall

Actor's Workshop, a Vancouver professional workshop and performance group, are taking up residence in Firehall No.2 at Gore and Cordova. Originally the headquarters of the Vancouver Fire Department, the building was designed by W.T. Whiteway and was constructed in 1905. In design, it is more formal and impressive than most of the other neighbourhood firehalls throughout the city. Renaissance arches, with decorated terra cotta capitals, support a cornice once crowned with a pediment.

In granting the firehall to the Actor's Workshop, city council overturned an earlier decision to demolish the building to make way for a 17-space parking lot for police vehicles. (In 1974 the building had been recommended for designation as an historical site by the Heritage Advisory Board but the city manager advised its deletion from the list.)

The theatre group countered this decision by a spirited defence of the structure, assisted by the Vancouver architectural firm of Henriquez and Todd. They presented council with a 40-page documented report titled Firehall No.2 -Actor's Workshop. Taped to its black cover was a happy-face candy lollipop.

The group was given the firehall and art has taken precedence over the automobile.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown

A seminar titled 'Respect for Historic Houses' was sponsored by the Prince Edward Island Heritage Foundation at Beaconsfield on November 13 and 14th. The seminar was conducted by Dorothy Duncan, Museums Advisor for the Heritage Administration Branch of the Ontario Government and John

Rempel, author of Building With Wood, published in 1967 by University of Toronto Press.

The Heritage Foundation is continuing with its policy of publishing material to stimulate a broader public interest in the heritage of the province. Since the start of this policy in 1974 with the establishment of a Publishing Committee, the Foundation has published The Years Before Anne, by F.W.P. Bolger (1974) and has reprinted John Stewart, by F.L. Pigot. Their latest publication, entitled Claws, Tales and Tomally, is at the printers. Written by the late George Leard, it is a study on the lobstering and the lobster-canning industry on P.E.I

BOOKS/LIVRES

Guidelines on the Designation of Heritage Conservation Districts, Part V of The Act to Provide for the Conservation, Protection and Preservation of Ontario's Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Ontario Government Bookstore, 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1V7, .50¢.

The Beautiful Old Houses of Quebec, by P. Roy Wilson, University of Toronto Press, 125 pages, \$12.50.

Rehabilitation and Revise, Architectural Record, August 1975. An article discussing the recycling of a toy factory, a cast iron building, a university library, a basement and the conservatory in the New York Botanical Gardens.

Contemporary Cathedrals, by Robert W. Collier, Harvest House, Montreal, 201 pages, \$10. A well-written account of 11 comprehensive developments in 7 cities. These include Place Bonaventure, Place Ville Marie and Westmount Square in Montreal, the Toronto-Dominion Centre in Toronto, St. James Town and Place de Ville in Ottawa, plus projects in Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver.

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