

Books - Livres

EDITORIAL

For any person with an abiding and passionate interest in architectural bibliography, the position of book review editor with an architectural journal is a dream come true. Work on this issue, the first I hope in a good number, has not blunted my initial excitement. This enthusiasm for architectural publications, in particular those of Canada, is what I hope to communicate each quarter as this section looks at books, primarily Canadian, mostly architectural, recent publications and classic works.

This is a good opportunity to thank the last Review Editor, Michele Laing for her contribution. Regrettably Michele was obliged to resign owing to increased responsibilities at the Architecture Library of the University of Manitoba. Appreciation is also owed to Don Lovell, the *Bulletin* Editor. Even with the many editorial duties and the concerns of a new professional architectural practice, Don devoted time to writing reviews and keeping this section alive.

In my view an important mandate of the SSAC *Bulletin* is to encourage information transfer. While the *Bulletin* has had notable success with the publication of papers, the Book Review section has alternately flourished and languished.

With the support of the Editor and the assistance of the reviewers, I intend to build on the solid foundations poured by earlier book review editors. More by luck than planning, this *Bulletin* illustrates several of the directions this section will follow.

One of the most frustrating aspects of Canadian architectural study is not learning about pertinent local publications. This area is expanding in terms of both quantity and quality, and while it may not always be possible to review every item, they can at least be referenced and sourced. *Stone Houses*, a regional, populist book on a topic of growing interest, is reviewed in this issue.

Books of national scope will of course still take precedence and every effort will be made to provide timely reviews. This *Bulletin* also reviews *Reviving Main Street* - Heritage Canada's guide to its innovative rehabilitation program for town cores. While this program has many proponents and few opponents, private concerns about the rationale and process can be heard. The *Bulletin* is pleased to present both sides in a special double feature with reviews by Stuart Lazear and Gregory Utas.

Past reviews have had a parochial tendency to ignore works outside our national borders. While this follows the Society's objective, its membership loses by perhaps not being aware of important architectural scholarship. While *A History of Architecture* by Spiro Kostof has only three very incidental references to Canada, Stanley Loten's review provides ample reason for its inclusion in this section.

In the future, whenever possible, this section will reinforce the special topic of the *Bulletin*. Unfortunately, for this issue on Manitoba, there was not sufficient time to solicit book reviews. However in an effort to remedy this deficiency, with much assistance from Sheila Grover and John Lehr, a short narrative survey of Manitoba architectural bibliography has been prepared. Again it is hoped that this article will be the first in a series of bibliographic notes on special topics. (See Part 2, June Issue.)

Without your support this section may again languish. Let me know of local material including free publications and pamphlets. Offer to write reviews by dropping me note indicating your specific field of interest. And most importantly let me know when we have overlooked or slighted any publication. I look forward to hearing from you. □

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REVIVING MAIN STREET edited by Deryck Holdsworth. Toronto: Heritage Canada Foundation/University of Toronto Press, 1985. 246 pp., many photographs, \$12.95 paper/\$25.00 cloth.

REVIVING MAIN STREET attempts to describe and synthesize the experience of the Heritage Canada Foundation in the area of Main Street Revitalization over the past five years. The descriptive component is tackled by former Main Street co-ordinators who worked within selected communities across Canada for three year periods commencing in 1981. The synthesis/overview is provided by Deryck Holdsworth, Harold Kalman, John Stewart and Jacques Dalibard.

Whether the specific approach be in promotion, marketing, rehabilitation, infill design, store front design, signage, organization of the business

community, grantsmanship or any of the other components of Main Street revitalization described in this book, there is a common theme that the mechanisms for assisting with the rejuvenation of a downtown community rest with the human, cultural and economic resources of that community. Dalibard summarizes this theme at the end of the book, "The answers to Main Street's problems are on the doorstep."

REVIVING MAIN STREET includes a fine mix of technical information and approaches without being heavy handed. Jim Mountain's "Promoting and Marketing Downtown" provides a detailed strategy for any community wishing to organize successful promotions. "Taking Care of Business" by Chris Pelham and Dan Macintosh usefully describes the economic factors such as market determination and retail recruitment which can be understood even by non-MBAs. The chapter on "Sympathetic New Design" (Peter Hyndman and Gordon Fulton) illustrates successful and unsuccessful infill construction. "Catching the Customer's Eye" which covers signage, echoes the philosophy of Main Street—"As with other aspects of Main Street revitalization, gradual change demonstrating by effective example rather than by imposition of a preconceived plan, creates a snowball effect whereby the broader potential of a district can gradually be realized."

"Store-Fronts for Downtown" by Hans Honegger and Bob Inwood deals with approaches to store-front design as well as technical issues. The illustrations, particularly the "before" and "after" series, are very effective and should be useful for encouraging revitalization. John Edwards in "Organizing for Change" presents the role of the Main Street co-ordinator in animating change through public and private sector organizations and community groups. This chapter ends with the ten essential ingredients for a successful downtown, which are in fact, the same elements which make a shopping mall succeed. Kalman also discusses the shopping mall in "Crisis on Main Street." The advantages of the shopping mall are described together with other issues (national chains, banks, etc.) facing downtown revitalization. Kalman's "Canada's Main Street" presents the evolution of public and commercial architecture in small town Canada.

In reading *Reviving Main Street* one can appreciate that the experiences and lessons of Main Street have been shared by former co-ordinators. Each author uses a variety of examples borrowed from their colleagues across the country, to illustrate their topics. This shared experience is to me the greatest value of the book. *Reviving Main Street* is timely but not timeless. As the Main Street approach matures, it will be a useful and essential catalyst for the next generation of books and manuals. □

by Stuart Lazear

Stuart Lazear currently the SSAC representative from Saskatchewan, is a former Main Street Program co-ordinator for Moose Jaw.

REVIVING MAIN STREET consists of ten essays by Heritage Canada staff and others who are or were associated with the foundation's pilot Main Street program. The book is divided into three parts: Part One is a history and characterization of the Canadian Main Street; Part Two is a survey of Main Street programs from Norway, Ontario to the present, with a brisk but extensive account of current Canadian programs; and Part Three concerns the "how-to" of revitalization, illustrated by brief references to the pilot projects. In effect, Part One and Part Two are a search for a theory of Main Street, and Part Three outlines practices more or less derived from the theory.

Heritage Canada's theory blames the decline of Main Street on shopping centres. It follows, according to the theory, that Main Street must behave as a shopping centre behaves. Mainly, this means that merchants must work collectively to define their marketing strategy, and, as a consequence of the marketing strategy, define an appropriate "look" for their street. Heritage concerns enter the theory at this remove, as one possible look. Heritage Canada, of course, prefers a heritage look, but offers no theoretical reason for doing so.

Part Three is directed mainly to future Main Street co-ordinators. It is over-elaborate as a job description, but falls short as a how-to manual. It contains hints about how to organize and animate a town, and how to work its political system in aid of revitalizing Main Street. It discusses marketing, from "tuning the mix" to devices such as joint promotions and window dressing. It contains a light-weight primer on rehabilitation. The chapter, "Sympathetic New Design" contains a list of seven approaches to infill which is a worthwhile contribution to this subject, and, by extension, to the discussion of contextualism which has occupied architects of late.

Heritage Canada is offering here a theory or model of economic revitalization for Main Street. One of the most troubling aspects of the book is that Heritage Canada is presenting this theory of economic

revitalization as if it were a theory of conservation. A theory of economic revitalization answers the question, "How does one improve the economy of . . ." A theory of conservation answers the question, "Which buildings should one save, and why." By confining itself to its shopping centre model, Heritage Canada even obscures its underlying assertion that heritage buildings are an exploitable resource, an assertion that is troubling it itself, and only partly true. Heritage Canada seems prepared to pin heritage conservation to the vagaries of the bottom line. The indifferent glass boxes of popular myth are a true expression of the bottom line as a determinant of form. Surely one of the chief purposes of the heritage movement is to preserve the view that builders and owners have social responsibilities separate from the mean requirements of profit.

Even as a theory of economic revitalization, the shopping centre model is not entirely adequate. Shopping centres are acknowledged to be "machines for selling"; an organic metaphor would better represent Main Street. The marketing canon itself abounds with business successes that resulted from creative entrepreneurs moving in a direction markedly different from the general trend. Such entrepreneurs succeeded by increasing the choice available in the marketplace, not by creating more of the same. Main Street is ineradicably different from a shopping centre. A main Street that glories in its difference, and makes creative use of it, will have a firmly rooted success, independent of the forces which support shopping centres.

The heritage movement has the beginnings of a sophisticated theory of conservation. We no longer save buildings solely because of their historical associations. By our consideration of context or social heritage we have moved some way towards a theory that accommodates social, economic and cultural factors. Ecology and systems theory have devices which allow them to deal with complex, non-linear relationships. I believe that the heritage movement, too, must learn how to deal with non-linear relationships in its theory of conservation. With a sound theory of conservation, heritage could take its place with urban design and other disciplines in the management of the built environment. But to do so it must work for its strengths, which have to do with the cultural values of buildings, and the dynamics of collective memory in the built environment. It is in a well-managed built environment, rich or poor, that heritage buildings are safest. They are safe because, while they have an economic function, they are understood to have other important functions as well.

Heritage Canada's theory of economic revitalization does seem to work. One cannot be entirely certain, since Heritage Canada has chosen to report neither its measures of success, nor its data. Independent observation would affirm that in the Main Streets to which Heritage Canada has devoted its attention a number of buildings have been rehabilitated. I suspect that Heritage Canada operates on an unstated theory of conservation whilst professing its theory of economic revitalization. Its labours have resulted in some Main Streets more handsome than they were before. On this level the Foundation can be congratulated.

Heritage Canada is now in the position of promoting a single analysis and a single solution to the Main Street problem. The remuddled facades we now deplore in Main Street were created according to an equally simplistic prescription. Furthermore, this prescription, too, was effective. It met the pragmatic test so well that it was applied regularly for more than thirty years. In the absence of a theory of conservation, today's newly renovated facades are just as much a faddish applique as the aluminum or Vitralite they replace.

By all means buy *Reviving Main Street* to give to any philistines who cross your path. It speaks their language. The arguments it contains may well still come as a surprise to some local politicians and decision makers. In such cases it will insinuate the idea that older buildings are a positive, exploitable resource. While this is not an entirely happy attitude, it is better than the belief that old buildings are a drag on a community. The shortcomings of the book should provoke those to whom its content is old hat into working on a better theory of conservation. Let us hope that one soon emerges. □

by Gregory P. Utas

Gregory Utas is an architectural historian and restoration architect with Public Works Canada. In this capacity he has surveyed federal buildings in many towns across Canada and has cultivated an appreciation for small scale streetscapes. A longtime SSAC member, Mr. Utas is a frequent contributor to the Cityscape column of the Ottawa Citizen.

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NOTICE

The following SSAC Members have moved without forwarding their new addresses. Anyone with information as to their new local is requested to contact the SSAC Membership Secretary.

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News From Across Canada

DALHOUSIE ART GALLERY

Andrew Cobb: The Vision of Dalhousie is an exhibit at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, Dalhousie University, until 6 April 1986. Andrew Cobb designed five well known campus buildings between 1913 and 1924. The architect's drawings, elevations and plans of the library, faculty club, chemistry building, clinical research centre and pharmacy building are the basis of the display.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

The School of Architecture at Waterloo is arranging eight (8) guest lecturers for the 1986 winter term. Visitors and topics will include:

- Adele Freedman on Peter Dickinson
- Graham Owen on new Architecture in South Africa
- Grady Clay on Ephemeral Places
- Michael Wilford on Stirling & Wilford's current work
- Eric Fiss and Nan Legate on Canadian Folk Architecture
- Robert Harbison on Space and Imagination

Michael Wilford, London, England, has been appointed as the "Architect Visiting Lecturer in Building Materials and Construction" for the 1986 winter term, and will give his opening lecture on Monday, March 3rd. Other dates not yet available.

Further Information: Ena Wrighton (519) 885-0394.

TORONTO

YESTERDAY'S NEWSMAKERS FOCUS OF MARKET GALLERY PHOTO EXHIBIT. The people, places and events that made news during the turbulent decade of the 1930s are the focus of more than 100 Globe and Mail photographs on display February 8 - May 4, 1986 at The Market Gallery of the City of Toronto Archives.

Chosen for their historical interest and impact, these images represent the work of pioneer photojournalists, most notably John Boyd (1898 - 1971), the Globe's first staff photographer. Significant political and social events documented in "The '30s: A Photo Legacy from the Globe and Mail," include the City's 1934 Centennial, demonstrations by the unemployed at Queen's Park, Labour Day and May Day parades, construction of landmark buildings, the annual Canadian National Exhibition, the 1934 visit of film star Mary Pickford, the 1939 royal visit, and home-front activities at the outbreak of the Second World War.

"In addition to providing insights into the interests and concerns of Torontonians during a benchmark decade in the City's development, this exhibition proves how valuable newspaper photo collections can be as unique historical resources for researchers and the public," says Karen Teeple of the City of Toronto Archives, curator of the show. "This exhibition only begins to tap the rich body of historically-significant images donated to the City by the Globe and Mail."

ABOVE IT ALL May 10 - July 6

The Market Gallery, Toronto, is staging a multi-media exhibition to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the CN Tower in June, 1986. This landmark show will tell how the world's tallest free-standing structure captured the imagination of residents and visitors alike from the day it was announced to its breathtaking "topping off" using a Sikorsky helicopter.