
 SOCIETY NEWS

 NOUVELLES DES SOCIÉTÉ

SSAC Annual Meeting
 May 28 - June 2, 1980
 Université du Québec à Montréal

Canadian Architecture in Change:
 Evolution or Revolution?

The SSAC Annual Meeting included, as always, not only the presentation of very interesting papers (which appear in precis form below) but the informal exchange of information and ideas which has always been such a vital part of our meetings. We were fortunate this year that many of these exchanges took place at receptions in connection with fascinating exhibitions. The Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec hosted a reception at their exhibition "L'évolution du dessin architecturale" and Concordia University was our host at their exhibition of "Cast-Iron Architecture in Montreal". These were auspicious surroundings for our talks and provided an interesting complement to the proceedings.

Session 1 - Three Canadian Cities

Michael McMordie - Chair

R. J. Spaxman discussed recent trends in architecture and urban design in Vancouver. He looked at these trends as reflections of new goals in urban design such as public debate of issues and flexibility in the planning process.

Michael Y. Seelig dealt with how Vancouver's planners and designers took account of the city's assets (waterfront, views, streets) and the demands of the population, after they were ignored during the rapid growth of the '60s and early '70s. Four very different projects, Robson Square, Granville Island, False Creek and Fairview Slopes, were examined.

K. Greenberg discussed the precedents and current work of the Urban Design Group recently formed within the City of Toronto, Department of Planning and Development. This group has a concern for Toronto's public spaces and the preservation and enhancement of the city's urban design legacy.

Marc J. Baraness looked at the reasons that the Yorkville district of Toronto has managed to retain an interesting, unified character during an age in which cities are becoming conglomerations of barely related parts.

Alan Stewart and Helene Dumais examined Montreal's development between 1760 and 1815 through the career of Pierre Foretier, land dealer and building speculator. The paper covered the two groups that his real estate activities fall into, his personal and speculative transactions and his activities in the St. Laurent suburb, as well as dealing with his work outside the walls.

Aline Gubbay discussed the 300 year development of Westmount through its architecture. The talk centred on the community's ability to retain its special individual character despite many foreign architectural influences and contemporary urban pressures.

Maurice Amiel spoke about perception and information in three districts of Montreal: Old Montreal, Outremont and the Plateau Mont-Royal.

Session 2 - Theatre Architecture

Anton Wagner - Chair

Alistair Kerr discussed theatre architecture in British Columbia, concentrating on Barkerville's restored theatre and the theatre at Fort Steele.

Loew's Wintergarden Theatre was examined by John C. Lindsay as a prime example of the rich, grand and exotic type of escapist architecture which typified the movie palace. The glamorous movie palace is set in the context of the development of theatres in Canada.

Dane Lanken spoke about Emmanuel Briffa, a Maltese born, Italian trained artist who arrived in Montreal in the early 1900s and designed the interior of scores of Canadian movie theatres before his death in 1955. Briffa's work, his contribution to the decorative arts in Canada and his place in the context of North American movie theatre design is examined in this paper.

The destruction of Winnipeg's Capitol Theatre in 1979 occasioned salvage recording by Parks Canada. Michel Soucy outlined the entire recording process. A series of eleven stereophotographic plates were produced for future photogrammetric plotting, if required at a later date for restoration, reconstruction or research purposes. Complete colour photographic coverage of the interior was also conducted.

Session 3 - Government in the Built Environment

Gregory Utas - Chair

Mary Fraser dealt with William Coverdale's professional development as an architect in Kingston, Ontario as evidenced by his twelve years spent designing and overseeing construction of the Kingston Penitentiary and later the Asylum for the Criminally Insane at Portsmouth.

Robert Hunter spoke about David Ewart, who directed the design and construction of federal buildings from 1897 until 1914. Thus not only did Ewart serve as Chief Architect during one of the busiest and most productive periods of government building in Canada's history, he also figured significantly in the first concentrated effort to transform Ottawa into a city evocative of the term "national capital".

Jacques C. Beauchamp examined the careers of two former leading engineers, Samuel Keefer and Thomas Coltrin Keefer, who greatly influenced the development of transportation systems in Canada before and after Confederation. Samuel Keefer, the first Chief Engineer of Public Works, designed the first Canadian Suspension Bridge at the Chaudiere Falls. T. C. Keefer was a great proponent of canals and railways and had an international reputation in his field.

The birth of civil aviation in Canada in the post-World War II period and the buildings which were designed to accommodate the growth were discussed by W. A. Ramsay. The evolution in design of terminal buildings is traced with illustrated examples of Canadian terminals.

Session 4 - Public and Commercial Architecture in Quebec to 1914

Laurier Lacroix - Chair

Susan Wagg discussed Perch Nobbs' 1907 design for the Macdonald Engineering Building, McGill as an Edwardian response to the Victorian melange of the McGill campus.

Michelle Nolin-Raynauld discussed the Bank of Montreal at Place d'Armes, a neo-classical building based on the designs of two architects, John Wells and David Rhind.

The introduction and history of cast-iron architecture in Montreal was ably discussed by Jean Belisle. First introduced to the city in the middle of the 19th century, many examples of the decorative material remain to the present.

Marc de Caraffe considered the perception of justice during the mid-19th century and its expression in judicial architecture in Quebec. Focusing on the standard plan district court houses designed by F. P. Rubidge and built between 1855 and 1863, they are examined for their relationship to contemporary Ontario court houses, and also to earlier Quebec ones.

Session 5 - Housing Canadians

Joan Simon - Chair

Anne Schrecker investigated the relationship between the structuring of built space and the structuring of other facets of a pre-literate culture, such as the Iroquois. Analysis of built forms indicates a conscious choice from a range of alternatives, also seen in family structure, and linguistic and political structure which show that the same formal structuring which appears in buildings appears also in relevant contexts in other structures. The house form thus quite literally pictures the structure of the culture.

Gerald C. Pocius looked at the contemporary spatial usage pattern in the Newfoundland community of Calvert and emphasized the persistence of traditional values regarding interior space. Even recent architectural forms such as the CMHC bungalow type have been adapted to fit the same behavioural patterns that mark the early hall-parlour and Georgian structures in the community.

Allen Penney traced the origins and development of domestic architecture in Nova Scotia. From the earlier pre-conquest structures dating before 1755, of which there are no remains, to the slightly later structures prefabricated in New England, or built according to the ethnic ideals of each group of settlers, materials and designs are discussed. Factors influencing the development of an indigenous Nova Scotia housing type are also considered.

Sarah McCutcheon examined the architecture and interior design of the residence of Montreal architect Ernest Cormier (1885 - 1980) which was designed and constructed in 1930-31. The house is studied in the context of Cormier's other buildings, especially the University of Montreal.

Pierre Beaupre described the Milton Parc project as an attempt to curtail the dispersal of the traditional residents of the Montreal city centre to the outskirts of the city. The social fabric of the area is being conserved with the physical fabric. Co-op housing is being encouraged, which leads to the development of services which are an outgrowth, not of public sector intervention, but of the decisions of users themselves.

J. Grant Wanzel discussed the nature of post-war housing in the Atlantic region. He believes that developments in post-war housing are regressive because they emphasize intra-regional disparities and that excessive profit taking has led to a housing stock that does not reflect the fabric of Maritime life.

Peter Lankin dealt with the search for an appropriate architecture for the Cree community of Nemaska, near James Bay. Both traditional Cree building types and frontier style architecture were researched to help produce designs that reflected a newly developed sense of community amongst the inhabitants of Nemaska. Constraints such as transportation, funding and national housing standards were also discussed. The designs, the reaction of the Cree to them, and the outcome of the project was discussed.