



The Urban History Newsletter

The Urban History Association
March 1990 Number 3

Preservation and the Urban Historian

One might think that architectural historians as a group would be at the forefront of historic preservation activism. Yet this is not entirely true. To be sure, many architectural historians have been actively involved, and their expert testimony, along with other forms of activism, have helped to save many important buildings. But many other historians hold themselves apart, and not only because of an academic sense of detachment. For generations, architectural historians (along with architects) have been taught that every age must evolve its own characteristic form of architectural expression; anything that hinders this development is to be regretted, and historic preservation, by focusing attention on the old and diminishing the opportunities for the new, can certainly be seen as such a hindrance. So the historian's vocation to study old buildings has not necessarily translated into an urge to save them; quite the contrary, it can just as easily lead to a willingness to see them swept away.

This brand of modernist historicism has troubled architects for well over a century. It troubled Sir George Gilbert Scott, the great Gothic Revival architect, but Scott found a way out of it. He advised his contemporaries to call off their desperate quest for a new style: something so hard to find was unlikely to be the natural expression of anything. On the contrary, the great and characteristic achievement of the nineteenth century was the discovery of history: therefore, he argued, historicist architecture must be the characteristic expression of the age. To put it another way, the discovery of history was like that earlier accession of knowledge that had precipitated Adam's fall from paradise: innocence might be Edenic, but once nineteenth century man had bitten the apple, there was no going back to a state of grace. For better or worse, historical knowledge was his birthright, and he might as well use it.

This argument has just about as much force today as it had then and might help to ease the conflict felt by many architectural historians between history and preservation -- between studying old buildings and preserving them. Perhaps saving old buildings is the real, authentic spirit of our time. But what can the preservation-

minded historian say to the classic accusation of laissez-faire modernists, "But you wouldn't want to save absolutely every old building, would you?" One answer is that this is so unlikely to happen that it should really be discounted. The threat of stagnation implied by the question is not a credible one and certainly no justification for standing by while demolition takes its course. Another answer is that the question's implicit premise needs to be examined more deeply. Why should the "default mode" of urban planning and development be to demolish? Why should we not rather expect that, unless a compelling case can be made for demolition, the presumption will be in favor of retention and reuse?

It is important to realize that in arbitrating between these two positions, there is no outside standard of correctness to which one can turn. The issue is one of social style and expectation and is therefore eminently arguable on the grounds of values, whether esthetic, historical, social, or ecological. A closer look, however, reveals that in shifting the presumption from demolition to preservation, a corresponding shift is initiated in the discussion of values. If the presumption is in favor of preservation, then a building's preservation-worthiness cannot rest on outstanding esthetic merit or historical significance -- qualities that are intrinsically rare and (under current preservation practice) are adduced specifically to distinguish the exceptional (and preservation-worthy) building from the run-of-the-mill (and expendable) background.

One way to think of this shift is as a gradual widening of vision, a diffusion of emphasis from individual buildings to cityscape or urban fabric. This is by no means absolute: some concern for urban fabric underlay the earliest preservation ordinances of the 1930s in Charleston and New Orleans, while on the other hand, preservation battles are still fought over individual buildings. Yet the balance is shifting, and the next frontier of preservation probably lies somewhere in the direction of integration with city planning through zoning, design guidelines, development controls, and a sensible -- literally a conservative -- regard for the built environment. Within the context of the city, preservation is thus becoming more explicitly urban. In other contexts, in small towns for example and all across the countryside, it is becoming more explicitly rural. The point is that everywhere it is looking to the larger picture and is linking up with conservation policies of an environmental or planning nature.

Whatever the particular context, one obvious consequence of this shift is that traditional modes of architectural history, which concentrate on interpreting individual buildings and establishing their position in a time stream, are becoming less and less useful. In order to function effectively, architectural historians need to accustom themselves to look and think more readily on the scale of the city, or at least of the neighborhood (something that a great many of them are doing in any case). They must also revise their esthetic standards in order to deal with buildings and agglomerations of buildings that may have little obvious merit within the framework of traditional architectural criticism. And here is where urban historians can render invaluable aid. They can work with architectural historians to develop a new interpretation of the urban environment, one that combines an eye for visual phenomena with a feel for urban geography and an awareness of the social history that informs them both.

In emphasizing urban geography and social history, I may seem to be limiting unduly the scope and contribution of urban history. Yet these are the areas in which I think preservation stands most in need of positive assistance. The profession has not done badly in identifying historic districts worthy of preservation, but if the corpus of preserved buildings and districts is to amount to a meaningful public history -- as opposed to an anthology -- then the drawing of boundaries and even the criteria for selection must be informed by a deeper understanding of urban geography. What are the characteristic spatial patterns that link or divide industrial from residential uses, upper from lower classes, older from newer immigrants, white from black? And how are these patterns manifested in the physical fabric of the city, not only its architecture but also its street pattern, its landscaping, its spatial relationships and density? How have populations and uses grown, diminished, or migrated across the terrain, and how can buildings and districts help to tell the story?

Each of these series of questions has essentially three aspects: geography or spatial relationships, social history, and architecture (meaning not only buildings but all of the other associated objects or "improvements," as the preservation ordinances put it, that make up the built environment. Each of the three is equally indispensable, but there is a special reason to emphasize the social history. The twin roots of traditional preservation -- famous people and great buildings -- have ensured that the story told by landmarks and historic districts is one of the rich and powerful. This is the story that is most likely to endure as tangible, public history. Probably many preservationists have seen history more or less in this light, but even if they maintained no conscious opinion on this point, the established criteria for preservation would tend towards this

result. In New York City, for example, countless homes of lawyers, doctors, and other upper-middle-class professionals have been preserved in neighborhoods like Brooklyn Heights, Park Slope, and Gramercy Park. Currently there is a great momentum for preserving the work places of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and even whole neighborhoods of work places. These could potentially serve as the basis for a public history of labor, but they are more likely to be interpreted as exemplars of entrepreneurship and industrial technology.

What is at issue here is a fundamental question of any historical enterprise: Whose story constitutes history, in this case the history of our cities and towns? For there are different stories, some of them violently conflicting, and it seems to me that as a form of public history, no less than as a form of public policy, preservation presents an important arena for the resolution of this conflict. Social groups of all kinds, whether organized labor, minorities, women, the poor, the rich, neighborhoods, ethnic groups, immigrants, veterans, capitalists, or scholars, have a legitimate interest in advancing their stories and in fighting for their recognition in the competitive arena of landmark designation and, just as important, landmark interpretation. Moreover, I think it reasonable to predict that, as preservation becomes better integrated into city planning -- itself an important arena for community activism -- the level of conflict over whose story is to be told will escalate.

So will the complexity of the issues. For the goals of public history will inevitably clash at times with other community needs and other public policies. Thoughtful museum professionals know that it is very difficult to exhibit something without in some way holding it up to admiration: how then can a sensitive and conscientious urban historian advocate the preservation of, say, an early twentieth-century tenement without seeming to condone, if not actually applaud, its dreadful overcrowding and primitive sanitation? This is not a trivial question: how it is answered will affect not only the public history of our cities but also a changing vision of how they should look, feel, and work. It is not a question that can be answered out of the theory or practice of academic history. It must be answered politically, but the terms of the debate -- and consequently the outcome -- can be shaped by urban historians. There is a need for urban historians to engage in the preservation process, to study, advise, and advocate, to participate in shaping both the public history and the planning policies of our cities and towns.

Edward Kaufman
Kaufman-Hewitt Associates

From the President

In my own experience as an urban historian our profession has passed through many fashions. When I began political bosses, architecture, and a demand that scholars look at cities, not just frontiers and nation states, were the cards. Then on came social mobility and the Afro-American rebellions with studies of race, employment, and welfare. Now the stage is filled with old city preservation acts, suburbs, and even something about women and families. Who knows what the next curtain will bring. I hope it will be an environmental union with this past research.

In any case it is very helpful in such a lively and fast-changing specialty to get suggestions about what books and articles work well in classrooms. Exchanges of syllabi work very nicely for this task. A syllabus, after all, is a teacher's statement about what worked. It is a winnowing from all the reviews of meaningful, timely, and significant research to the selection that college students seem to respond to this year. Tim Crimmins of the University of Georgia at Atlanta and I began this in a modest way some years ago. It is a custom that ought to be expanded to include all our members.

Sam Bass Warner, Jr.
Boston University

From the Executive Secretary-Treasurer

Late last year Jason Epstein, the well-known editor at Random House, published a large volume edited by Geoffrey O'Brien entitled *A Reader's Catalogue*. It constitutes an annotated compilation of more than 40,000 books-in-print, fiction and non-fiction. This hefty volume has attained wide circulation, in part because of its selection as an alternate choice of The Book of the Month Club. Books by urban historians are well represented. Included among the many, many titles are those written by our founder, Kenneth T. Jackson, past president Richard C. Wade, president Sam Bass Warner, Jr., and president-elect Zane L. Miller.

With an eye cast toward making the attainments of urban historians known to a broader audience, each issue of this informative newsletter is distributed, on a complimentary basis, to recipients who might otherwise not have the opportunity to read it. They include: executive officers of major disciplinary organizations (e.g., AHA, OAH, SSHA, etc.); editors of journals and newsletters (e.g. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, *Reviews in American History*, *Urban Affairs Quarterly*); and manuscript acquisitions editors at major commercial and university publishers. If you have specific suggestions about individuals whose names should be added to this list (within or beyond the foregoing categories), please send them to me.

The report on membership is good. We

ended our charter year, 1989, with a paid membership of 264. Renewal notices for 1990 were mailed in mid-October of 1989, with a reminder postal card dispatched at the end of November and final notices sent out in early January. Our membership renewal rate--as I write on February 19th--exceeds 90 percent. I am pleased to further report that we have begun our second year with a paid membership of 295; while we were losing 25 charter members we gained 56 new members. The Association now has 8 life members (Eugenic Ladner Birch, Blaine A. Brownell, Ruth Carter, Robert Fishman, Timothy Gilfoyle, Roger W. Lotchin, Carol A. O'Connor, and Richard C. Wade); other members took advantage of the six-year membership offer.

Still much needed: a volunteer with a powerful computer, skilled at data base management, for the purpose of compiling an address and telephone directory, a guide to current research, and a demographic profile of our membership. Please contact me, if interested in this important project, for a further discussion as to what is entailed.

Our first annual dinner on December 28th in San Francisco, thanks to the peerless planning of Bob Cherny, was a great success. President-elect Warner presided. Attending were 54 guests, who enjoyed a superb Chinese banquet in the atrium of a restored art deco building and listened to an engrossing paper delivered by Richard Wade (soon to be published in the *Journal of Urban History*). A framed certificate was presented to President Wade by the Association to mark the occasion of his leadership during our charter year; Zane Miller, a former student of Professor Wade, read congratulatory messages hailing our outgoing president written by friends who could not attend, including Kenneth Jackson, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Roger Lotchin, and former Senator George McGovern. Elsewhere in this newsletter is a complete report on the annual business meeting.

Plans are underway for the second annual dinner, to be held in Manhattan in conjunction with the AHA meeting (December 27-30). More details will appear in the next newsletter.

Meanwhile, I hope that as many of you as possible have made your plans to attend our second annual luncheon during the OAH (March 24th) in Washington, D.C. William H. Whyte, our distinguished guest speaker, will discuss "Urban Foolishness ..."

Michael H. Ebner
Lake Forest College

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Cities and the Second World War

The destruction of Verdun and Ypres, air raids against Rhenish and English cities, and occupations in Palestine and Belgium in World War One marked a break in patterns of warfare which since the seventeenth century have exempted most cities from the threat of destruction. Sieges, occupations, bombardments and liberations in the Second World War were however of an intensity and scale which seemed to call the very existence of urban civilization into question. An international congress, "Cities in the Second World War: An International Comparison," was held in Stuttgart, 13-15 September 1989. Unfolding as a series of case studies arranged topically, the conference -- sponsored by the Bibliothek fur Zeitgeschichte of Stuttgart -- was organized to see whether the conditions of cities in different countries can be compared.

At the start of the conference, Tomasz Szarota (Warsaw) presented an overview of "Everyday Life in Occupied Capital Cities of Europe." Szarota argued that local conditions did not vary enough to invalidate a comparative approach. The ensuing discussion raised question about whether the experience of occupation in eastern Europe bears comparison with circumstances in other war zones or in countries (such as the US) where battles were not fought. A majority of the participants, affirming that total war affected most aspects of city life whether subject to combat conditions or not, concluded that cities around the world can be studied together. As Richard Overy (London) phrased this point of view, war brought institutional and spatial changes in cities to accommodate military needs, distorted labor markets and networks of supplies, introduced large numbers of workers and soldiers into the urban population, and provoked intense competition over resources and over advantages for the postwar era.

This consensus, however, masked an ambiguity which no one articulated. There were no explicitly comparative papers at the conference. The comparisons emerged from setting the examples of similar cities side by side. Most of the papers were delivered by experts on a particular city or country. To the extent that speakers confronted similar issues or provided information on the same topics, comparisons can be made. (The papers were clustered topically, and each panel included papers about European and non-European cities, in the Middle East, Asia or America.) But how many case studies would be needed before a general portrait could be composed of a particular type of urban experience (the military base town, the industrial city, the neutral city, occupied or besieged cities)? And who, then, could synthesize and draw together the stories of different cities?

The conference speakers, given their focus on individual cities, naturally tended to portray the city as a victim of war. As Rudolf Foerster

(Dresden) reminded the audience in the conference's last paper, the people of Dresden, as the people in other Allied and Axis cities, had supported their government in policies which led to war. Arguing that civilians were not innocent victims in the normal sense, Foerster was the only speaker who even by implication raised the question to what extent the roots of war lay buried in the unresolved tensions of prewar urban political, social and economic developments.

An exhibition on Stuttgart during the Second World War will remain open until July 22, 1990. The accompanying catalogue, *Ausstellungsreihe Stuttgart im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, is available from Bleicher Verlag in Gerlingen.

Josef W. Konvitz
Michigan State University

First Annual Meeting

The Association conducted its first annual business meeting, chaired by Richard C. Wade, at 4:30 PM on December 28, 1989 at the San Francisco Hilton Hotel. Twenty-seven members attended.

What follows, in digest form, is a report on the deliberations: (1) by unanimous vote the Executive Secretary was instructed to seek affiliate status with the American Historical Association; (2) by unanimous vote the Association endorsed the 1940 statement on academic freedom and tenure of the American Association of University Professors; (3) presentation on the financial status of the UHA by Michael Ebner; (4) report from newsletter editor Ann Durkin Keating; (5) report from the chair of the nominating committee, Carol A. O'Connor, that Zane L. Miller has been duly nominated and elected as president-elect; (6) report from Christopher Silver on awards that might be offered by the Association and the designation of Zane Miller to chair a committee to draft a formal proposal for approval by general membership; (7) report by Leonard Wallock on prospect--still pending, subject to further review--of co-sponsoring a forthcoming annual meeting of Society of American City and Regional Planning History; (8) report from Blaine A. Brownell on the draft by-laws of the Association, which were approved with minor modifications subject to a majority vote of the general membership; and (9) report from President-elect Warner on his initiative for a Syllabus Exchange. The meeting adjourned as Richard Wade handed the gavel to Sam Warner.

1989 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

What follows is an abbreviated statement of the Association's expenses and income for fiscal year 1989 (January 1-December 31). Members who wish to receive a detailed financial statement should write to the Executive-Secretary Treasurer.

Expenses \$4,232.35
Income 13,510.00
BALANCE + 9,277.65

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Everyone is encouraged to contribute bibliography -- from one entry to a whole category. Contributors this issue include: Mark Cortiula, University of Guelph (Canada); Michael H. Ebner, Lake Forest College (U.S. books); Ronald Dale Karr, University of Lowell (U.S. articles); and Thomas Sugrue, Harvard University (Europe).

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THE URBAN HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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NOTICE: A special business meeting of the Association will be held at 4:30 p.m., March 23rd, in the Jackson Room of the Washington Hilton and Towers.

Research in Progress

James Timberlake and Stephen Kiernan, Department of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania explain: "Perhaps the most significant demographic occurrence of the past twenty-five years has been the changeover of the principal place of work to former suburbs. We use the word 'former' here, as these once incomplete cities begin to approach urbanity in their inclusion of places to work and shop, as well as live. It is the form and design of these perimeter centers that is the subject of our research, and we have broadened our initial search to thirteen centers, geographically spread across the United States. We are currently synthesizing this information, using some computer mapping techniques, into a series of architectural and urban design analysis plans for each of the centers. The intended products of this research will take two forms, a book and a design exercise, with a proposal for a prototypical perimeter center which addresses the issues listed above."

Robin L. Einhorn, University of California, Berkeley explains: "Mainly I am trying to figure out how and to what extent to revise my dissertation, 'Before the Machine.' This is a study of municipal finance, public works decision-making and political culture in Chicago from the city's founding to the Great Fire of 1871, based chiefly on city council records that DID NOT burn in the fire. The book should shed new light on the origin of machine politics and the 19th century urban power structure as revealed in such concrete matters as who gained from and who paid for government at different stages of urban growth. Power, I'm trying to argue, may really be measurable more in money than in political rhetoric. And money is what an overwhelming proportion of government activity was (and is) all about. I've written two articles as part of this research, 'The Civil War and Municipal Government in Chicago,' which will appear in *Toward a Social History of the Civil War* edited by Maris Vinovskis and 'Lake Shore Protection and City Government,' for *Chicago History*."

Judith Spraul-Schmidt, University of Cincinnati writes: "I have just defended my dissertation 'The Origins of Modern City Government: From Corporate Regulation to Municipal Corporation in New York, New Orleans, and Cincinnati, 1785-1870' under the direction of Zane L. Miller. This study offers a view of the origins of modern city government in the United States that depicts both the phrase "municipal corporation" and the conception it connoted as a mid-nineteenth century invention. To make this case, I contend that the colonial view of the chartered city as a mercantilistic agency of the sovereign for the encouragement and regulation of commerce survived the American Revolution and

persisted well into the nineteenth century. State legislators redefined the role of the chartered city corporation in the mid-nineteenth century, changing it from an agent for the encouragement and regulation of commerce to an agent for the provision of services to residents as a means of promoting the welfare of urban society. Between 1840 and 1870 this process of expanding the role of city corporations produced the American municipal corporation with broad powers as defined in another invention of the mid-nineteenth century, state municipal codes."

Susan Battley, State University of New York, explains: "My research focuses on late medieval/early modern English provincial urban elites, particularly with respect to the towns of East Anglia. Most recently I have been examining group dynamics and interfamilial networks and kinship ties in terms of identification with civic and corporate interests. In seigneurial boroughs such as Lynn and Bury St. Edmunds, whose corporate privileges were circumscribed by restrictive charters, the struggle to gain autonomy was especially acute and manifested itself in a variety of ways. Civic ritual as an expression of corporate ethos, a topic richly mined for the great Italian Renaissance cities, is one aspect of this broader inquiry, and is yielding interesting information about collective versus individual behavior on the part of the provincial urban *potentiores*. I presented 'Ceremony and Struggle in Medieval Lynn,' at the 1988 Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo), as part of my research on the political ramifications of civic ritual. I have also authored two short articles on Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds for *Medieval England: An Encyclopedia* to be published by Garland Press in 1990."

Larry McCann, Mount Allison University, writes: "I am presently on leave preparing the manuscript for a book on 'The Shaping of Urban Canada, 1867-1929.' Themes addressed include urbanization and the rise of Canadian cities, metropolitan dominance in the urban system, regional patterns of urban and industrial development, and the evolution of the urban landscape. As an historical geographer, I am particularly interested in examining regional variations in the processes shaping Canadian cities. To this end, detailed information on the changing economy, class structure, and social and land use patterns has been examined for Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Research completed for the book points to clear evidence of significant variations, particularly in the economic and class structure of heartland and hinterland cities. Not unexpectedly, ethnic pluralism (French and British) is also a major shaping force of regional diversity. The research project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada."

Upcoming Conferences and Seminars

"History: Cities, Parks, and People" is the theme of the 12th Annual Conference on Public History, March 7-10, in San Diego. Representative sessions include: Management in Urban National Parks, Planning Exhibitions for City and Local History Museums, World's Fairs and Urban Environments, How Does Los Angeles Preserve its History?, and Local History Publications. The program chair is Murney Gerlach (Univ. of San Diego).

"The New Suburban History: Toward a Problematic?" is a session scheduled at the 1990 OAH Annual Meeting in Washington D.C., for Friday March 23 at noon. Its organizers intend it to serve as a major brainstorming session. Since suburban history has taken off as a hot topic, suburban historians have not yet gathered en masse to assess their accomplishments and discuss a problematic for their subfield. Kenneth T. Jackson, Columbia University, will preside. Panelists Henry Binford, Northwestern University, John Archer, University of Minnesota, Richard Harris, McMaster University, Mary Corbin Sies, University of Maryland, and Robert Fishman, Rutgers University-Camden, will talk for only 10-12 minutes leaving an hour for audience response and discussion.

Scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on March 24 at the OAH meeting is "Ideas, the Social Sciences, and the City: The Historiography of American Urban History." Michael H. Ebner, Lake Forest College, will chair the panel. Terrence J. McDonald, University of Michigan, Charles N. Glaab, University of Toledo, Mark H. Rose, Michigan Tech, and William H. Wilson, North Texas State, will present papers. Commentators are Eric H. Monkkonen, UCLA, and Howard Gillette, Jr., George Washington University.

The Annual Urban History Association Luncheon, with Sam Bass Warner, Jr., Boston University, presiding, will be held March 24 at noon. The guest speaker is William H. Whyte, American Conservation Association, whose significant books have influenced a generation of urban historians. Mr. Whyte's topic is "Urban Foolishness. . ." Also scheduled for that time (March 24 at noon) at the OAH is a workshop entitled "Encyclopedias of City History." Deborah S. Gardner, *Encyclopedia of New York City*, will serve as the moderator, with panelists John Alviti, Atwater-Kent Museum, Scott Cline, Seattle City Archivist, and David J. Bodenhamer, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis.

"Cities in the World System" is the title of the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the Political Economy of the World-System to be held March 29-31, 1990 at the University of Washington. Panels will be organized around the following subthemes: the historical relationship between port cities and

the world-economy; industrial cities; hegemonic cities (Amsterdam, London, New York, Tokyo; specifically and in comparative terms); and city states. For more information contact Resat Kasaba, Jackson School of International Studies, Thomson Hall DR-05, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195.

The Society for Commercial Archeology is soliciting papers for presentation at its 1990 annual meeting to be held October 3-6, in Pittsburgh. Paper proposals may address all topics related to: "Highways to History: the Automobile Age." One session will be devoted to the Pennsylvania Turnpike, in commemoration of its 50th anniversary. Both 20-minute papers and 10-minute "work in progress" reports will be accepted. Send three copies of the proposal (400 word maximum, with identification on first copy only) and a vitae to Jan Jennings, 485 College of Design, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, no later than April 1, 1990.

The simultaneous rise of urban growth and political absolutism in western Europe and Japan from 1500 to 1700 is the focus of a conference, entitled "Paris and Edo" Urban Growth and Absolutism in the Early Modern Period," to be sponsored by Brown University's Institute for International Studies and the Toyko City Government. The conference, to be held in Tokyo, June 6-10, 1990 is being organized by history professors James L. McCain, Brown University; John Merriman, Yale University; and Ugawa Kaoru, Rikkyo University, Tokyo. The conference will include American, French and Japanese scholars of early modern urban history. Conferees will present papers comparing urban development in Japan and France in the early modern period to "advance our understanding of what was universal and what was culturally specific about the early modern experience in two geographically separate societies." For information: the Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Box 1970, Providence, Rhode Island 02912.

"Venues of Inquiry into the American City: the Place of Museums, Libraries and Archives," will be held at the Chicago Historical Society October 29 & 30, 1990. The conference will be directed by Frank Jewell and the Valentine Museum under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Open to 150 participants, the Venues conference will follow "Modes of Inquiry into the American City." Sessions will focus on city museums as sources for study of urban life, as interpreters of the past, and as social instruments. These sessions will set an agenda for scholars outside of the academy to collaborate on research, exhibitions, films and publications in comparative urban history. For more information contact Judy Harris, Valentine Museum, 1015 E. Clay Street, Richmond, VA 23219, (804)649-0711.

Richmond History Project

The Valentine Museum has undertaken the task of creating the first scholarly history of Richmond, Virginia. Through a series of "works-in-progress," exhibitions, weekly staff seminars and physical surveys of the city, the Valentine is exploring the diverse material and people that form the fabric of the city's past. In 1988, The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded the Valentine a \$150,000 planning grant toward this endeavor, known as the Richmond History Project. This is the largest planning grant ever awarded to a museum by the NEH.

The Valentine is mid-way through the planning phase of the effort, which includes a continuing exhibition opening in 1992, an hour-long film, and an illustrated history directed to a broad audience. In this initial phase, the museum staff has reviewed nationally recognized examples of these three media to examine their potential use to communicate various themes in Richmond's history. The staff has also researched and explored the city's neighborhoods to determine how closely the museum's collections reflect Richmond's diverse heritage.

The Valentine presents its research into the city's past in a series of changing exhibitions that began in 1985 and are scheduled through 1991. These exhibitions cover the major themes in Richmond's history, but concentrate on three broad areas formerly neglected: post-revolutionary and pre-Civil War Richmond; the 20th Century, particularly after 1918; and groups traditionally outside the focus of museum exhibitions--women, blacks and Jews.

These exhibitions undergo systematic evaluations, before and after installation, to determine how the Valentine can most effectively orchestrate artifacts, labels, video, audio and guided tours into an enriching experience for museum visitors. As pilot projects, these shows allow the museum staff to hone their exhibition skills while exploring a variety of issues in urban and social history. The culmination of the Richmond History Project will result in the first concise scholarly examination of Richmond's history and will add greatly to knowledge about the nature of cities and the complex workings of their inhabitants.

Michael McGrann
Valentine Museum

Canadian Urban History Conference

The Centre for Canadian Studies in Edinburgh University was host to a conference on "The Nineteenth Century Canadian City: Internal Change and External Links", May 4 to 7, 1989. Canadian historiography is still able to exploit the metaphors and concerns of urban history to explore a wide range of issues. Judy Wiesinger's skilled organization took advantage of this to produce a programme which was lively and varied

enough to keep most participants indoors despite the temptation of the Scottish sunshine.

The 'urban variable' took a beating in some of the opening sessions. Frank Innes (Windsor) and Kenneth Pryke (Windsor) made a well reasoned case for using some of the inadequate data we have on population, death and disease in Canada in 1871. The old belief that density of population in urban centres was an explanatory variable was little help. Poverty, site and economic contact were far better. R. W. Widdis (Regina) placed his study of Belleville in its hinterland. His examination of household structures indicated few of the contrasts identified by Gagan in Peel County. Urban places remain important for Canadians because urban places play an important part in so many accounts of national history such as metropolitanism and staples (entrepot) theory.

There were lots of building blocks here for the fabric of Canadian urban history. There were several reports of work being done on the built environment -- an area where Canadian urban history is strong. John Weaver (McMaster) suggested that the capital rich -- capital poor implications of core-periphery should be modified. The importance of self building was emphasized by Michael Doucet (Ryerson) in his account of early Hamilton and by Richard Harris (McMaster) who outlined important differences between middle class and blue collar suburbanization in Toronto. The apartment boom in Toronto (Richard Dennis, University College London) was a metropolitan import which attracted unfavorable moral comment and a set of bye laws to evade. Marc Choko (UQAM) and Richard Harris located the decline in house ownership in Montreal in the late 19th century and came up with 'a culture of property' for explanation. Heather Nicole's (Queen's University, Kingston) presented some early results of a study of bonusing on Eastern Ontario as a whole. Most interesting was the suggestion that these interventions of the local state in industrial and infrastructure development which were so characteristic of Canada enabled the 'public culture' of each place to influence the choice economic enterprise.

Gil Stelter had opened the conference with an entertaining address which emphasized the continuity and links between Canadian and European traditions of urbanization in terms of layout, planning and government. Despite this the (Canadian) discussant of one session was moved to comment that the excellence of the papers was limited by the 'parochial' geographic and cultural focus of many of them. This nation-centric focus is one which many urban histories share. Urban history with its theories, metaphors and concerns for systems demands a universality with is difficult to meet. The questions arising from the Canadian context go far beyond this excellent conference.

R.J. Morris
Edinburgh University

Awards, Grants, Appointments and Prizes

William H. Wilson (University of North Texas) is the recipient of two awards as the author of *The City Beautiful Movement* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). He received the Lewis Mumford Prize of The Society for American City and Regional Planning History for the best book in planning history, 1986-89, and an award from the Association of American Publishers for the outstanding book of 1989 in the category of architecture and urban planning.

Ellsworth Brown, president of the Chicago Historical Society, will be installed for a two-year term as president of the American Association of Museums at its annual meeting in May.

The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute awards grants-in-aid each year to enable younger scholars to conduct research at the FDR Library in Hyde Park, NY, on the Roosevelts and their era. Inquiries should be directed to: Research Grants, The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, 259 Old Albany Post Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538

Bibliographies, Guides, Publications and Research Collections

The Guelph Regional Project has published a second research tool: *Inventory of Primary and Archival Sources: Guelph and Wellington County to 1940*. The volume includes a foreword by Gilbert Stelter, an annotated inventory of over 3600 items organized by types of record, a guide to 60 archival repositories, and six indexes. The Guelph Regional Project's approach to regional and local history and the computer methods used to create these research tools should be of considerable interest to scholars outside the immediate local region who may be undertaking similar projects. Elizabeth Bloomfield directed the project. The book is available for \$42.50 (when prepayment accompanies order by mail) from Media Distribution, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G2W1.

George Washington University has recently developed a computerized data-base of Washington D.C. history and culture. Known as Collections DC, the data-base will allow researchers to scan descriptions of major collections from a multitude of repositories. It provides access to descriptions and locations of collections of manuscripts, photographs, archives, oral histories and other primary material from the District of Columbia, as well as Prince George's and Montgomery counties and Northern Virginia. The Collections DC database will be available both at the Gelman Library of The George Washington University and at the Washingtoniana Division of the District of Columbia Public Library. For more information call Project Archivist Susan M. Wheeler at (202)994-7549.

The Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology published, in December of 1989, a special issue of its journal *Artistic Heritage in Flanders*. This handsomely produced and lavishly illustrated magazine, 40 pages in length, was issued for the purpose of announcing the "Flemish Industrial Heritage Campaign, 1990-91. Inquiries about purchasing single copies should be directed to: Vlaamse Vereniging voor Industriële Archeologie vzw, postbus 30, postkantoor Maria Hendrikplein, 9000-Ghent-12, Belgium.

York College of the City University of New York will house in its library a newly created collection of archival materials relative to notable Black American musicians and composers who have resided, or continue to reside, in the Jamaica area, where the college is located. Among the "greats" in musical history who once lived in this community are the late Count Basie, Fess Williams, Fats Waller, James P. Johnson, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Sidney Bechet and Clarence Williams.

San Francisco Earthquakes

Carl S. Smith, Northwestern University, discussed natural disasters and cities, in a Baltimore Sun feature which appeared after the San Francisco earthquake last fall.

"It is a little too early to tell precisely what this latest earthquake will reveal, but some familiar patterns are already starting to prevail. The first news was fragmentary and descriptive, and newspapers all had that little box that told where this one stands in the top 10 earthquakes or natural disasters to hit the United States or the world during the 20th century or through all recorded time. There already are the specific tales of heroism and hardship ['Red Cross, other jump into action,' 'For survivors, conveniences vanish.'] and of the ironies and quirks of fate ['Disaster left many paradoxes,' 'Second phase of repairs came too late for the double-decker freeway.'] And there were the reports of pledges of sympathy and aid from mayors of other cities, as well as carefully staged photographs of on-site inspections by elected officials whose main purpose is to demonstrate that the government is on top of things and that the system works and cares. We also hear about whether this could happen to us where we live and what we might do about it, and what it will do to our insurance rates in any case. We saw all of these last week, and we also saw them after the earthquake of 1906. . . . It is hard to measure the effect of modern mass media and the extent to which our understanding of the earthquake is shaped by the graphic immediacy of the coverage. When we look for recent changes tied to the communication revolution, however, we should keep in mind that more than a century ago the telegraph immediately let the rest of America and the world know that Chicago was aflame."