



NEWSLETTER

The first order of business is to request those of you who have not renewed their 2013 membership to please consider doing so now, before we drop you from the mailing list. This will mean no more newsletters or Construction History Journals or any of the other benefits of membership.

Of note during the quarter was the first organizational meeting in preparation for the 5th International Congress in Chicago. Several volunteers attended and a number of committees have been formed and are already active. The first order of business is to settle on a location within the main business district and on a date. Even though we are two years out there is much preparatory work to be done. Please let Tom Leslie (tleslie@iastate.edu) if you are able to help. Further information is included inside.

Several other meetings of immediate interest are listed in this newsletter, including one in Chicago to be jointly sponsored with APT.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society held telephonically in January, Benjamin Ibarra-Sevilla was elected to the Management Committee.

Finally. . a last appeal for your renewals please where these are due – we need you!

Brian Bowen
Chair, Management Committee

Don Friedman
Newsletter Editor

THANKS TO OUR INSTITUTIONAL AND CORPORATE MEMBERS

- * A. Ottavino Corp.
- * Associated General Contractors of America
- * Auburn University
- * Canadian Centre for Architecture
- * Consigli Construction Co.
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*Burnham Hotel, Chicago.
(Old Reliance Building)*

THE SEAGRAM BUILDING, NEW YORK, NY

Building Seagram, Phyllis Lambert, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2013

This new book on the planning, design and construction of this signature 20th century building has just been published. Marvin Levine briefly reviews it below.



*Seagram Building, 375 Park Avenue, New York, NY
Completed 1957*

In 1966 I was a young engineering student working as a chain man in a surveying party for the New York firm of Earl B. Lovell and S.P. Belcher. The firm provided surveying services for most of the prominent real estate developer/builders and general contractors in New York City. I found myself on Park Avenue many days hanging off steel making sure the high rise buildings were “plumb”. I would pass the Seagram Building almost every day without any clue as to what went into the building of this project and the many other buildings we worked on. In those days I was more concerned with getting off the building in one piece and making my way home to Brooklyn on the subway. It wasn’t until many years later that I became interested in how these major buildings got built.

Phyllis Lambert’s book tells the story of how one of the greatest icons of twentieth-century architecture was built. The building was commissioned by Samuel Bron-

fman, founder of the Canadian distillery dynasty Seagram, who had purchased the site in 1951. Bronfman’s daughter, Phyllis Lambert was twenty-seven years old when she took over the search for an architect and chose Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), and Philip Johnson (1906-2005). Lambert, who later trained as an architect at the Illinois Institute of Technology, describes how she became Seagram’s representative and point person in dealing with the Seagram building committee, her father Samuel Bronfman, Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, Lou Crandall (1893-1978, President of George A. Fuller, general contractor), and the myriad of other people involved in this major undertaking. She describes the building and site design process, selection of materials, costs, alternates, leasing, economic analysis, tax, landmark implications, legal strategies, disputes, and all of the many details faced by the project team. She also provides, at the end of the book, an in depth look at the sale of the Seagram’s company and the sale of the building (twice).

Lambert makes use of previously unpublished personal archives, company correspondence, and photographs to tell an insider’s view of the debates, resolutions, and unknown dramas of the building’s construction, as well as its crucial role in the history of modern art and architectural culture.

This book is a must for architects, historians, developers, builders, lawyers and anyone interested in the process of putting up a skyscraper in a major metropolitan city.

In 1979 Ms. Lambert went on to found and endow the Centre for Canadian Architecture/Centre Canadienne d’Architecture (CCA) in Montreal, which we are very pleased to have as an Institutional member of CHSA. CCA has certainly one of the premier Architectural libraries in the world and is worth a visit for interest and research.www.cca.qc.ca

MEDIEVAL OR MODERN?**QUESTIONS AND DIALOGUES ON ARCHITECTURE AND MODERNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE WOOLWORTH BUILDING CENTENNIAL**

The Woolworth building designed by Cass Gilbert, opened on April 24th 1913 to become the World's tallest building outstripping the Metropolitan Life Insurance building completed just three years before. There is an exhibit about the building at the Skyscraper Museum in New York until July 24th and below is information about a symposium to be held on June 14th.



In conjunction with the current exhibition *The Woolworth Building @ 100*, the Skyscraper Museum will present an afternoon of illustrated talks, inquiry, and dialogue inspired by the centennial of New York City's great Gothic tower, "The Cathedral of Commerce."

Tallest building in the world on its opening in 1913, the Woolworth Building was at once a marvel of early 20th-century technology and a masterpiece of the architectural arts. In an era when New York architecture communicated as much through the abundance of ornament, as through ambitious scale, the Woolworth Building represented an artistic creation of the highest order.

The free public program will bring together eight accomplished scholars and critics who have published widely on skyscraper history, and specifically on the Woolworth Building, with the goal of raising new sorts of questions to inform the coming decades of architectural and urban history.

The title of the afternoon's inquiry "Medieval or Modern?" is intended as a provocation, or critique, of an old-fashioned obsession of art history with the "battle of styles"—but it also prompts, in our charge to the speakers, a consideration of the divergent lenses through which the "world's tallest building" in 1913 can be viewed.

The program, on Friday, June 14 from 1:00-5:00 pm, is organized in two sessions, each with three speakers and one official respondent. The illustrated talks will be kept brief—15 to 20 minutes—so that a dialogue among the speakers, as well as with the audience, is built into the program. The location of the session has yet to be determined, but the goal is to hold the talks in the Woolworth Building. The confirmed program is as follows:

PROGRAM**SESSION ONE: 1:00-3:00**

CAROL WILLIS : Welcome and Introduction

KEVIN MURPHY

"In the Nature of Materials": Adapting Gothic to American Architecture

MARY BETH BETTS

Gilbert Gothic: An Eclectic Architect Designs Skyscrapers

JOANNA MERWOOD-SALISBURY

Gilbert & Sullivan: White Curtain Walls in New York & Chicago, 1890-1913

Respondent: GAIL FENSKE

Discussion

COFFEE BREAK: 3:00-3:15

MEDIEVAL OR MODERN?

QUESTIONS AND DIALOGUES ON ARCHITECTURE AND MODERNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE WOOLWORTH BUILDING CENTENNIAL

SESSION TWO: 3:15-4:30

SUZANNE STEPHENS

"The Skyscraper Problem": Montgomery Schuyler and the Woolworth Building

MARY WOODS

The Woolworth Building and the American Avant Garde

DIETRICH NEUMANN

Woolworth and the World: A Skyscraper for Mussolini

Respondent: GAIL FENSKE

Discussion 4:30-5:00

5:00 RECEPTION

SPEAKER BIOS:

Mary Beth Betts is director of research at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and former associate curator for architectural collections, New-York Historical Society, where she compiled the first finding aid to the Cass Gilbert collection.

Gail Fenske, author of *The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York*, is Professor of Architecture in the School of Architecture, Art & Historic Preservation at Roger Williams University.

Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, author of *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City*, is Director of Academic Affairs and an Associate Professor in the School of Constructed Environments at Parsons The New School for Design.

Kevin Murphy is Professor and Executive Officer in the Ph.D. Program in Art History at the CUNY Graduate Center and is published articles on topics in European and American architecture and material culture in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Journal of Urban History*, as well as in a number of anthologies.

Dietrich Neumann is Royce Family Professor for the History of Modern Architecture and Urban Studies in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at Brown University; he has published essays on the history of building materials, and books on German skyscrapers of the 1920s, on the history of film set design, and architectural illumination.

Suzanne Stephens is a deputy editor and writer for *Architectural Record* and numerous publications. She is an adjunct professor at Barnard College, teaching the history of architectural criticism. Her dissertation on American architectural writing addressed contemporary responses to the Woolworth Building and the evolution of skyscraper criticism.

Mary N. Woods is Michael A. McCarthy Professor of Architectural Theory at Cornell University; she is the author of *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America*.

Carol Willis, the founder, director, and curator of The Skyscraper Museum is the author of *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*.

Saturday Session, June 15, 2013

In addition to the Friday afternoon session of talks by the invited scholars and critics, The Skyscraper Museum is issuing a Call for Papers for a morning session on Saturday, June 15, 2013, 9:30–11:45am that invites students and researchers on topics that relate to the Woolworth Building, either broadly or specifically, to submit proposals for a 15-minute presentation. Six to eight papers will be invited to participate in the morning session.

Proposals of no more than 250 words should be sent by email to The Skyscraper Museum to: education@skyscraper.org. A committee organized by the Museum will review the proposals and offer places on the program to six to eight individuals. The deadline for submission is 5:00 pm, May 1, 2013.

Please direct inquiries to Elinor Rubin at: elinor@skyscraper.org

Click here for further symposium details.

"The Woolworth Building @ 100" opened to the public on February 27, 2013 and will run through July 14, 2013. For more information on the exhibition, click here.

For information on gallery tours of the exhibition and other exhibition-related programming, click here.

5TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CONSTRUCTION HISTORY 2015, CHICAGO

The first gathering of construction historians who have agreed to form the nucleus of an organizing committee took place at the Burnham Hotel on February 17th, with Tom Leslie leading the local effort. Tentative committees are in place covering Accommodations, Facilities & Catering, Social Activities, Visits & Tours, Website & Registration, Scientific Committee & Editorial, Fundraising & Marketing. But we need more local volunteers in most of these areas, especially for help with the website and with graphics. Please let Tom know if you are willing to help (tleslie@iastate.edu).

The first order of business is locking down a date (probably in the May/June time frame) and a venue, which will probably be one of the downtown/loop hotels. Previous congresses in Europe have all been at universities, but the principal Chicago institutions are outside the central city area, which is where we believe the congress should be focused.

We are slowly assembling Chicago images that we can use at the website and for other publicity. Please send any suggestions to Tom Leslie.



*Burnham Hotel, Chicago.
(Old Reliance Building)*

We have a few copies of the 2011 Construction History Journal, # 27, available for sale at \$25.00 each. Contact chs@coa.gatech.edu if you are interested.

A major retrospective of the architect Le Corbusier's work opens at MOMA in New York on June 9th
www.moma.org

SECOND NATIONAL COVERED BRIDGE CONFERENCE

Organized by the National Center for Preservation Technology & Training of the National Parks Service

The deadline for registering for the covered bridge conference is fast approaching! Make plans to attend this unique, exciting event from June 5-8 in Dayton, Ohio:

<http://ncptt.nps.gov/blog/second-national-covered-bridges-conference/>

We are expecting former Congressman Steven LaTourette as the welcoming keynote speaker. We will also have welcoming remarks by Dayton Mayor Gary Leitzell, Ohio SHPO Burt Logan, ODOT's Tom Barrett, FHWA Ohio Administrator Laurie Leffler, and FHWA's Sheila Duwadi. Well respected covered bridge preservation specialist Arnold Graton will be the featured luncheon speaker. Plus we will offer two days of paper sessions on variety of topics from rehab strategies to Chinese covered bridges.

Other events include a timber framing demonstration, an opening reception at the historic Engineers Club of Dayton featuring a presentation by Dayton History's Brady Kress, a barbeque dinner at the Preble County Historical Society, and tours of several local covered bridges.

The registration deadline is Wednesday, May 15, 2013.



Eldean Bridge (Long Truss, 1860) in Miami County, will be on both Saturday tours. HAER photo by Jet Lowe

NEW CORPORATE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT CHSA

JOHN CANNING & CO. LTD
CHESHIRE, CT

John Canning founded his company in Connecticut in the early 1970's after immigrating from Scotland where he received his training in applied decorative arts. His arrival coincided with the rise of the preservation movement which led to the demand for tradesmen expert in the decorative arts. His first projects involved the restoration of the Battell Chapel at Yale University and the Connecticut State Capitol. This led to the establishment of the Canning Studios which has continued its work on high quality projects requiring fine workmanship.

www.canning-studios.com

CONSIGLI CONSTRUCTION CO., INC.
MILFORD, MA

Founded in 1905 as a masonry contractor, Consigli is now in its second century of operation as a general contractor and continues to be run by the fourth generation of the family. The company's main areas of operation are New England and New York State. While the range of their work is broad there is a strong emphasis on historic restoration which has included work at Cambridge Public Library, Bowdoin College and Trinity Church, Boston among others.

www.consigli.com



We had a request from Richard Taylor Architects for any photographs we could locate of abandoned historic homes and farm buildings, especially any that still show vestiges of their original design. We promised to bring this to the attention of the members, so if you have anything to pass on, contact Richard at

Richard@rtastudio.com

The Construction History Society of America's interest group at Linked-In now has over 350 members including we imagine quite a few of you. We are trying to get more discussion going – any ideas will be welcomed by Jenn Cappeto (jcappeto@yahoo.com) who is looking after the group.

FUTURE EVENTS CHSA

2013

June 22	Chicago, IL	Skyscraper Symposium (tentative – more info from tlestie@iastate.edu)
November 12 -15	Minneapolis, MN	Construction History session in conjunction with AIA annual state convention.

2014

November	Minneapolis, MN	4th Biennial meeting
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2015

May/June	Chicago, IL	5th International Congress on Construction History
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FUTURE EVENTS OF INTEREST TO CHSA MEMBERS

2013

August 16-18	Wilmington, IL	Historic Construction Equipment Association www.hcea.net
August 25-28	Chicago, IL	Public Works Historical Society, in conjunction With the American Public Works Association Meeting www.apwa.net/pwhs
September 25-28	Charlotte, NC	SESAH Annual Meeting www.sesah2013-charlotte.org
October 9-12	Madrid, Spain	VIII National Congress of Construction History sanitago.huerta@upm.es
October 11-15	New York, NY	Association for Preservation Technology, Preserving the Metropolis www.apti.org
2014 April 9-13	Austin, TX	Society for Architectural History Annual meeting www.sah.org
Apr 11-13	Cambridge, UK	First Construction History Society Conference www.constructionhistory.co.uk

The Guastavino exhibit that was a feature of our biennial meeting at MIT, Boston has moved to the National Building Museum in Washington, DC
www.nbm.org/guastavino

WHO WE ARE

The Society is dedicated to the study of the history and evolution of all aspects of the built environment—its creation, maintenance and management. It is a forum for scholars and professionals in the field to share, meet and exchange ideas and research.

Membership is open to a wide range of construction related disciplines involved in the planning, development, design and construction of buildings and engineering infrastructure, in addition to those concerned with their operation and preservation.

Members share a passion for examining how our existing structures were planned, designed and built, with the purpose of using this knowledge to better preserve what we have and to guide us in determining future directions.

The US branch of the Construction History Society is a distinct entity catering to the historical studies and interests of its members here in America. Membership in the US branch includes full benefits in CHS at large, including receipt of the Society's Journal and newsletter and links to scholars in the field worldwide.

CORRESPONDING SOCIETIES

Public Works Historical Society, www.pwhs.net

Historical Construction Equipment Association, www.hcea.net

Society of Architectural Historians, www.sah.org

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Brian Bowen (Chairman), GA Tech, Atlanta, GA

Tom Leslie (Secretary), Iowa State University, Ames, IA

Jeff Beard, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA

Jenn Cappeto: Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, New York, NY

Meghan Elliott, Meyer Borgman Johnson, Minneapolis, MN

Lee Gray, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC

Peter Hilger: University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Donald Friedman, Old Structures Engineering, New York, NY

Marvin Levine: Levine Companies, Deerfield, IL

Construction History Society Representative
James Campbell, Cambridge, UK

COMMITTEE ADVISORS

Frank Matero, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

John Ochsendorf, MIT, Cambridge, MA

THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER AND THE ONLY VEHICLE WE HAVE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ONE ANOTHER.
SO PLEASE USE THIS TO LET US KNOW:

- * your interests in construction history, your current research, précis of recent lectures, etc.
- * books, texts & articles that your fellow readers should know about
- * names and e-addresses of colleagues and friends that we can include on our mailing list
- * if you are willing to write a brief article for us.

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