

## From Barns to Domesticity: Material Flexibility and Innovation in the Walter and Ruby Behlen House

**T**ucked away in a 1960s residential area in Columbus, Nebraska, is a unique modern house, built for Walter and Ruby Behlen. Constructed in 1958, the house is reflective of Walter Behlen's manufacturing career and his desire to be a modern man of the atomic age.



**Behlen House, Columbus, NE, 1958**  
*(photo: David Murphy, image courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society)*

Walt Behlen was an innovator, self-taught in science, technology, and engineering. He established the Behlen Manufacturing Company in 1936; his most notable innovation was a new method of corrugating 16-gauge steel panels which, when assembled with a corrugated roof, acted as a monolithic unit that provided great strength and stability to the structure as a whole, needing no beams or load-bearing columns. Behlen buildings were soon given the most extreme of stress tests—and a great advertising scheme—by surviving a nuclear weapons effects blast at Yucca Flats, Nevada, in 1955. Although the buildings were marketed primarily for grain bins and machine sheds, their actual applications included industrial buildings, high schools, churches—and this grand house.

Walt Behlen had advertised that his panels were so adaptable that anything could be built with them. To lend validation to this statement, he hired the world-renowned architectural and engineering firm Leo A. Daly of Omaha to design his showpiece. Jack Savage,

*(cont'd on pg.8)*

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### DOCOMOMO-US

Email: [info@docomomo-us.org](mailto:info@docomomo-us.org)  
 Mail: PO Box 230977  
 New York, NY 10023

[www.docomomo-us.org](http://www.docomomo-us.org)

## Welcome

Starting with this summer 2006 newsletter, we will occasionally dedicate an issue to a particular subject or building type. This issue is devoted largely to the preservation of single-family residences, a building type that remains in danger in many places. Considered cutting-edge when first built, the clean lines and flat roofs of modern homes are still often regarded as atypical domestic architecture.

Added to the changing taste, today's standards for larger livable space and the economic pressure to develop fully on existing lots threaten to overwhelm many mid-twentieth-century modern houses, especially as the original generations of owners give way to their heirs and others with an increasingly minimal connection to the past. This is true both for individual houses built for specific clients as well as those in suburban developments. The advocacy and education provided by DOCOMOMO and its members can only help to create and support more sympathetic owners.

This issue is also different because in the future all newsletters and news communiqués will only be available electronically, although during the transition we will make a limited number of printed copies available when requested. This will make the newsletter more easily available and more current. At the same time it will achieve a significant reduction in cost, always a concern for an all-volunteer organization like DOCOMOMO-US. We have also updated the content and graphics of our website ([www.docomomo-us.org](http://www.docomomo-us.org)) to be able to support different preservation efforts taking place across the country with more current information.

The interest in preserving

## Revitalization Plans Endanger New Deal Planned Community

**T**he village of Greenhills, Ohio, conceived during the Depression as one of twenty proposed housing initiatives under the auspices of Franklin Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration, remains one of only three such developments built. While building these "greenbelt" communities was intended mainly to create jobs as well as middle- and low-income housing, the New Deal progressive planners and social housing advocates also incorporated modern town planning and architectural design inspired by the Garden City movement, pursuing a socialist agenda that included open space and community amenities.



**Typical duplex, Greenhills, OH**  
(photo: Theo Prudon)

Completed in 1938 with 676 units, Greenhills (approximately twenty miles outside of Cincinnati) was laid out with a central core consisting of a swimming pool, business center, community building, and open play areas and lawns accessible by pedestrian paths. Homes were a mix of single-family, semi-detached, rowhouses, and low-rise apartments lining curving streets. The loosely International Style wood-frame buildings, some with flat roofs, some pitched, are small and minimally detailed by today's standards. Chief architect at Greenhills was European-born, socially-minded Roland Wank, previously chief architect for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and later partner in the New York architecture firm Wank Adams Slavin Associates (WASA).

Unlike its sister cities, Greenbelt in Maryland, and Greendale in Wisconsin, Greenhills has not fared as well in regard to the preservation of its built fabric. The village is undergoing a substantial redevelopment plan called DeWitt Landing, which has introduced inconsistent architectural forms and massing to the area. Facing a declining and aging population, Greenhills' village government sought to revitalize the community (and the tax base) through new housing construction, hoping to attract a younger, more affluent population. In an unusual move, though, the village government became its own developer, spending \$3.6 million (\$1 million of

which came from a bond issue voted on by Greenhills residents) in 2005 to purchase clusters of the original two-story flat-roof apartment buildings for rehabilitation. Some buildings, determined too deteriorated for repair, were demolished and the land was turned over to a manufactured homes company in order to erect "traditional" single-family housing. Because Greenhills has no preservation ordinance, and federal funds are not being used for the project, no preservation review is required.

In the meantime, Greenhills' National Register Historic District status may be potentially endangered, as major construction in this area centers on the project's namesake, DeWitt Street, a small road in the heart of the district. Several historic rowhouses also have been demolished to make way for larger, more expensive new houses, but, to date, sale of the new dwellings remains slow.

In contrast to Greenbelt (on the outskirts of Washington, D.C.), where residents formed a cooperative of homeowners after the federal government sold the homes (and eventually established guidelines for preservation), Greenhills residents retained individual ownership, a move that has resulted in less community appreciation for village history and a dwindling argument for preservation, particularly with deteriorated structures in an economically struggling community. While the village leaders hope to retain a mix of income and housing consistent with its history, the financial reality facing Greenhills places substantial pressure not only on the survival of the historic district but also on the village itself.

The Greenhills Historical Society has, with the backing of the Cincinnati Preservation Association and the National New Deal Preservation Association, requested a moratorium on demolition in the village, and asked for an open planning process to guide future development. However, some townspeople welcome the redevelopment,



**Rowhouses in Greenhills, OH**  
(photo: Theo Prudon)

remarking that the traditional aesthetics of the new homes are a "big improvement" over the dilapidated rectilinear rowhouses that preceded them. At present, the village government and the developer have not met (individually or collectively) with the Greenhills Historical Society to discuss the possibility of sensitive development in the area.

—Diane De Fazio

## Welcome

modern architecture has grown and the importance of DOCOMOMO-US is evident from the fact that we have more than a half dozen new chapters in formation across the US. New chapters, like the existing chapters, will have sections on the new site or links to chapter sites that will allow us to provide a broader and more informed platform for knowledge about and help with preserving modern architecture.

Finally, every two years a chapter of DOCOMOMO International—DOCOMOMO-US was the host in 2004—organizes the international conference, the one event where representatives from all the different member countries come together. This year, DOCOMOMO Turkey will host the first half of the IXth International Conference in Istanbul and the second half in Ankara in September. We hope that many US members will be able to attend.

—Theodore Prudon  
President  
DOCOMOMO-US

## New England Modernism, b.g.: The Wells House, Southbridge, MA



Rear façade, Wells House, Southbridge, MA, 1933  
(photo: David Fixler)

In 1933, George Wells, the president of the American Optical company, commissioned a house in Southbridge, MA, from Paul Wood, a young associate at Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott. Like the well-known Rachel Raymond House in Belmont, MA (Eleanor Raymond, 1931), and the previously unknown Richard and Caroline Field House in Weston, MA (Edwin 'Ned' Goodell, 1931-34), which was saved with the help of DOCOMOMO-US/New England (see *DOCOMOMO Newsletter, Spring 2001*), the Wells House is proof of the diversity and richness of the history of modernism in New England, before the Gropius house of 1938 supposedly brought modernism there, or "b.g.," as they say in the chapter.

Built of whitewashed brick with flat roofs and steel framed window walls, the house is a substantial structure of over 9,000 square feet. It remains largely in original condition. The structure bears strong resemblance to Mies van der Rohe-designed homes in Germany—Wolf House in Gubin (1925-1927) and Lange House in Krefeld (1928)—especially now that the original white-wash has disappeared and the house appears as a natural finish brick structure. How Wells, who eventually developed Old Sturbridge Village (a living museum where visitors experience 1830s New England), came to hire a young unknown to design a house easily considered avant-garde for its time and place has yet to be fully explained.

DOCOMOMO-US/New England was contacted in 2000 (shortly after the house was acquired) by the current owner, and has since provided guidance about the finishes and the windows. The Wells house is listed as an historic structure with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and is also listed with the local historical commission in Southbridge, MA. (It is a property "tracked" by DOCOMOMO, but it is not presently on the Register.) The home and 56-acre estate is on the market again, and although both the Southbridge and the Massachusetts Historical Commissions are aware of the house's significance, there is nonetheless reason to be concerned. Much as it has for other houses in the past, DOCOMOMO-US/NE is doing everything possible to foster a happy outcome.

—David Fixler

## Chapter News

### NEW YORK/TRI-STATE

#### New York/Tri-State Holds DOCOMOMO's First Register Training Session

On Tuesday, April 25, the New York/Tri-State Chapter presented DOCOMOMO's first ever Register training session. Hosted by Knoll, Inc., at its Manhattan showroom amidst quintessential modern furniture by Saarinen, Mies, Aalto, and Bertola, members and newcomers learned the ins-and-outs of modern architecture documentation, fiche forms, and the soon-to-be launched online Register.

The DOCOMOMO Register is an open list of significant modern movement architectural heritage that has several purposes: it can help assure or reinforce the protection and proper conservation of modern buildings; it can be used as a tool in regional/national heritage designation campaigns; and it has educational and strategic purposes. Moreover, it has a qualitative aim—to assemble a comprehensive survey of modern buildings, sites, neighborhoods, gardens, and landscapes in a region or country.



With a backdrop of the New York skyline and a selection of classics from the KnollStudio® line, Hansel Hernandez-Navarro gives his Register Presentation (photo: NY/Tri-State)

The Register is part of the overall effort by DOCOMOMO International and its regional

## Sarasota School on the Space Coast for Sale: Rudolph and Twitchell's Kerr House

**P**aul Rudolph and Ralph Twitchell's W. W. Kerr Jr. Residence (1951) near Cape Canaveral on the Atlantic Ocean in Melbourne Beach, Florida, was unknown until its recent mention in Christopher Domin and Joseph King's **Paul Rudolph: The Florida Houses** (Princeton Architectural Press, 2003). A strong version of regional modernism, it illustrates the post-World War II theories of the Sarasota School of Architecture. It is one of only a few surviving modern movement buildings on the "Space Coast," and, thus, a rare witness to the modernism that was once a prevalent expression of the region's historical grounding in the "forward-thinking" experimentation and exploration of the early space program.

Originally a four bedroom multi-level structure, the 2,900-square foot Kerr House is a composition of orthogonal elements organized around a central double-height living area. Flanking split-level wings accommodate other functions, with the whole complex possessing the spatial efficiency of a trailer home, one of the South's most mundane icons (and a 'building typology' Rudolph loved to



Front perspective with detail of clerestory windows. (photo: Andrew Roman)



Rear façade, Kerr House, Melbourne Beach, FL, 1951 (photo: Andrew Roman)

explore). It does not possess the Sarasota houses' overtly expressive elements. Instead, experimenting with regional typologies, building/site relationships, the environment, and indigenous materials, the architects took the more subtle approach of setting the building into its site, a 150-foot expanse of sea grapes and sand dunes, while strengthening the overall massing. Physically and intellectually, the architects embraced their site by framing views that dissolve the boundary between inside and out, thereby orienting inhabitants so they are always connected with the ocean. As in their other houses, the Kerr was built to breathe, using a modularized grid of solid cypress posts and beams and infill of Ocala lime-block, giant sliding glass doors, and wood jalousie walls to provide the perfect natural

air conditioning of cross-ventilation and cooling.

Before the 1988 purchase by the Petrone Family, the Kerr House was subjected to unsympathetic owners and alterations, including Wright-inspired etching on the upper clerestory windows, a move that fueled the local folklore that it was Wright's. Upon learning of the Rudolph connection, Joseph and Hope Petrone (and, today, Joyce Petrone) undertook the restoration of the remaining elements. Today, the house is listed for sale and although a small part was marred during the past two years' hurricanes, it is quite livable and its devoted owner is seeking a sympathetic buyer.

—Andrew Roman

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working groups to fulfill one of the organization's primary aims: "To document significant examples of the modern movement and to share knowledge worldwide by creating a collective register." The International Register effort was started in 1992 and is headed by the International Specialist Committee on Registers (ISC/R). Presently, the Register is comprised of documentation forms (known as fiches) in "full" or "minimum" format. Hard copies of all completed fiches are archived at the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam in a collection numbering more than 800 entries from over 35 countries. DOCOMOMO International has also initiated a pilot project for archiving fiches online in database format (*DOCOMOMO Journal*, March 2005).

New York/Tri-State initiated the idea to have training sessions as a comprehensive way to present the newly-invigorated Register efforts. The purpose of the session was to generate interest among members, encourage them to volunteer for fiche authoring, and to reach a wider group of people rather than training people individually—all with the larger goal of keeping the U. S. Register active. We created a simple "how to" PowerPoint session, tailored to our members by showcasing local buildings as examples and including local resources such as libraries, archives, and research centers. Screen images of the Register web site prepared by the DOCOMOMO-US National Registers Committee showed the site's future potential. Our presentation can be easily adapted by each of the chapters with area-appropriate information.

The New York metro area

## Paul Rudolph's Endangered Legacy

**L**ike the Kerr House (*see Sarasota School on the Space Coast for Sale: Rudolph and Twitchell's Kerr House, this issue*), a few of Paul Rudolph's other commissions currently face uncertain futures. The three sites listed below have caught DOCOMOMO's attention.

### Cerrito Residence, Watch Hill, RI, 1956

Built for Dr. and Mrs. Louis Cerrito in 1956 as their summer residence, the house in Watch Hill, RI, has remained under family supervision until fairly recently. The building, set on a substantial lot, remains in relatively good physical condition, but it is reported that the new owners plan to demolish the house and build a new, presumably much larger, structure. Since this is a prime piece of real estate in an area of large but undistinguished houses, this is no surprise. To date, local efforts to save the house have been unsuccessful.

From the road, the Cerrito Residence appears as a long single-story volume at the top of a slope, its broad face oriented south looking towards the expansive views of the ocean. The driveway reaches the top of the slope and encounters the opposite side of the house where the rectangular volume rests on a stone base. This lower portion contains the garage and other services; an exterior stair gives access to the living areas above. On the south side the stone base appears as short transversal walls supporting the main



**Cerrito Residence from the street, Watch Hill, RI**

(photo: Mary McLeod)

volume that seems to hover above the ground; some of the stone walls extend into the landscape as the edge of a lawn terrace in front of the living room. The main volume of the house has a flat roof, floor-to-ceiling openings and clapboard siding painted light gray with white trim. The front and back are dominated by projecting overhangs—the most characteristic elements of the project—freestanding planes delicately framed and supported by a structure of diagonal members extending beyond the footprint of the building.

In its articulation of surface and structure, configuration of volume, choice of materials and, particularly its tension between weight and lightness, the Cerrito Residence can be seen as a happy marriage between Rudolph's architectural explorations of his Florida houses from the 1940s and 1950s and the New England residential tradition.

—Gabriel Field

### Riverview High School, Sarasota, FL, 1958

Despite its exceptional historical value, Florida's Sarasota County school board has recently voted to raze Paul Rudolph's first major public project, Riverview High School (1958). Never nominated for National Register designation, Riverview High School was the largest of ten school projects built during the tenure of Philip Hiss, former chair of the local school board.

Riverview High School represents the genesis of a major turning point in American educational architecture history: a change to newer styles and materials (in this case, the so-called "Sarasota School of Architecture") and a departure from more traditional forms. The school's forward-thinking design, predicated on natural ventilation, has since been altered, though its architectural descendants are easily recognized in contemporary "green" building strategies that emphasize light and air. Over time, many of the school's distinctive features were destroyed or otherwise replaced: concrete sunshades were replaced with canvas awnings, and a new metal hip roof replaced the original flat roof. Local architect Martin Daoust noted, "It is noteworthy to emphasize that...only Neo-Renaissance- and Gothic Revival-styled schools have been preserved by [the Sarasota County school board] so far." As indicated by the school board's decision, the major issues of concern about preservation of Riverview were maintenance, function, and security, though no "cost-to-renovate" vs. "cost-to-rebuild" comparison study was ever commissioned. The board intends to replace the school with a parking facility.

### Orange County Government Center, Goshen, NY, 1963

Paul Rudolph's Orange County Government Center in Goshen, NY (1963), highlights a different side of the late architect's career, though Rudolph's architectural skill is evident in the building's imaginative use of light, space, and material.

The building's Brutalist style has garnered its share of champions and detractors since its inception in the pre-Revolutionary village of Goshen (approximately 50 miles northwest of New York City). However, the Center is not without operational issues: several of its many roofs leak, interior spaces (designed to capitalize on available light) are dim, and heating costs, while not an issue at the time of design, have become increasingly prohibitive. County Executive Edward Diana proposed structural demolition in 2004, but plans were dismissed due to financial constrictions. Another call for demolition was raised in 2005, but the county has taken no further action.

Potential for thorough building conservation is uncertain. Last year, the Paul Rudolph Foundation and a small committee of architects, preservationists, and architectural historians visited the Center, seeking to explore alternative uses for the building.

—Diane De Fazio

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training session was also an opportunity to introduce members to the potential of the online database. The database will be accessed through [www.docomomo-us.org](http://www.docomomo-us.org), and will have three components: contributors, where interested individuals can set up accounts and work on fiches independently; administrative, for Registers' Committee review and management purposes; and search/access, an interactive database for viewing and printing fiches.

At the end of the presentation, attendees were given copies of the chapter's "Wish List" of buildings that await documentation (a work-in-progress, also the base for the Manhattan Modern Map), as well as completed fiche samples. While the online database is being finalized, Register contributors can prepare fiches on the standard MSWord form and send them to the local Register chair. The chair will review the fiche, add it to the appropriate "paper" archive and transfer the content to the online database when it launches in the near future. After a good round of questions and answers, participants continued conversations on the "Wish List" and all things modern as they ogled their favorite mid-twentieth-century furniture designs.

—Hansel Hernandez-Navarro,  
New York/Tri-State Register  
Committee Chair

*If you would like more information about how to prepare a fiche, get a copy of the NY/Tri-State "Wish List," or to sign up to document a particular building contact, the Register Committee Chair via [nytri@docomomo-us.org](mailto:nytri@docomomo-us.org).*



Interior, Kuhn House, Princeton, NJ, 1960-61  
(photo: Richard Longstreth)

## A Modern House's Happy Fate: Thaddeus Longstreth's Kuhn House, Princeton, NJ

**T**he fate of the Harold and Estelle Kuhn House (1960-61) in Princeton, New Jersey, has been happier than that of many modernist dwellings of the postwar era. Designed by the Princeton-based Thaddeus Longstreth, who also maintained an association with Richard Neutra, the house had been meticulously maintained in its original condition by the Kuhns (he a Princeton math professor, she a community activist). Their stewardship was matched by their concern that the house be sold to a party that would continue that respect, a commitment which led them to accept a bid (lower than the asking price) from the husband-wife team of architecture professors, Ron Witte and Sarah Whiting, who had recently been hired by the School of Architecture at Princeton University.

The *New York Times* (February 26, 2006) recently described the house as "tread[ing] lightly on its wooded 2.2-acre site." On the main level, it has a large living room with floor-to-ceiling glass, a kitchen with a bubble skylight, a dining room big enough for two large tables and a 160-square foot

## Easy Living

**I**f I had any misgivings about buying our 1960 Longstreth house in Princeton, it was a slight nagging fear in the back of my head over the risk of becoming a *Dwell*, *Wallpaper*, *Nest* retro-modern cliché. Would we be buying into an entire lifestyle package, down to the drinks we'd have to know how to serve on just the right trays at just the right hour before just the right dinner?

It turns out that we *did* buy an entire lifestyle package: for a nominal fee, the original owners ended up leaving us a surprising number of the house's contents, from the Saarinen Womb chair and Louise Nevelson print to the espresso machine, the vase of pussy willows in the bathroom, and the fiction on the shelves that the former owner built into the main hallway (we were happy to find that their exquisite taste extended to their choice of reading). They were moving into a Manhattan apartment that they'd owned for years already so they were all equipped, and their three sons had already taken what they wanted, leaving us the rest. Given that we owned very little furniture aside from computers, desks, and various surplus-property finds from the universities where we'd previously taught, this generosity on the part of the previous owners was especially extraordinary.

But even with such perfect accoutrements, we've somehow managed to steer clear of the cliché that fills contemporary magazines. Maybe

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## Chapter News

### GEORGIA

#### Advocacy Report: 615 Peachtree Street Building

Preparation for demolition of the 615 Peachtree Street building began in April 2006 to make way for a new condominium development. As of May 1, the developer's plans for the site have not been officially announced.



615 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA, 1959 (photo: Thomas F. Little)

Originally commissioned by First National Bank of Atlanta (later occupied by Wachovia), 615 Peachtree Street was designed by Smith & Smith Architects of Atlanta in 1959. Francis P. Smith, a student of the noted American architect Paul Cret (1876-1945), moved to Atlanta in 1909 to become the first chairman of Georgia Tech's newly-established architecture department. He worked in that capacity until 1922, when he returned to private practice.

The next year he formed a partnership with established Atlanta architect R. S. Pringle. The partnership lasted until 1934, during which time Pringle & Smith designed several important buildings in Atlanta. Pringle retired in the 1930s, but Smith continued to practice independently. Smith's son,

## A Newly-Discovered Noyes House: Jackson House, Dover, MA

Until recently, the Jackson House in Dover, MA (1940-41), the first house designed by Eliot Fette Noyes (1910-1977), was unknown to students of mid-twentieth-century modernism. Noyes is famed as one of the 'Harvard Five' who built so many modernist houses in New Canaan, CT (see *New York/Tri-state Newsletter XXVI, 2006*). He is also renowned for the influential corporate design programs that he managed for IBM from the 1950s -1970s, together with many of the century's most famous architects and designers: Paul Rand, Charles Eames, Ivan Chermayeff, Marcel Breuer, and Eero Saarinen, among others. The discovery of the Jackson

Noyes took up this project himself, synthesizing New England traditions with a modern aesthetic absorbed from his teachers. The composition of the house is quite obviously inspired by Gropius and Breuer's 1938 Gropius House in nearby Lincoln, MA, but it also retains the traditional hallways, materials, and something of the accordion-like shape of the traditional New England farmhouse.

Such syntheses are to be found throughout the house: plywood walls have a walnut stain and the massive, open plan living-dining area is combined with a full basement below and tautly closed bedrooms above. The lintels of the fireplaces—which are all situated in a massive field-



Jackson House, Dover, MA, 1940-41  
(photo: John Harwood)

House opens a new chapter in our knowledge of Noyes' career. The Jackson Family is currently considering the possibility of searching for a sympathetic new owner, and has graciously agreed to allow the house to be published by DOCOMOMO-US.

The Jackson House was the first fruit of Noyes' training in the architecture program at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design under the direction of the Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius. Gropius had assumed control of the school in 1937, bringing along his fellow former *Bauhauser*, Marcel Breuer. Noyes, who already had a steady hand at the drafting board, was energized by the new approach and became a star Gropius-Breuer pupil. He went to work for them soon after graduating in 1938. In their office, Noyes became immersed in Gropius's project of adapting European modernism's formal innovations to the New England context. In **Scope of Total Architecture** (1943), Gropius had described the office's work as an attempt "to face the problem [of house design] in much the same way as the early builders of the region had faced it when, with the best technical means at their disposal, they built unostentatious, clearly-defined buildings that were able to withstand the rigors of the climate and that expressed the social attitude of their inhabitants."

stone wall at the core of the house—offer the most dramatic example. At the edges, the lintel stones are laid flush at either side without resting on the stones below in a modernizing, atectonic gesture. Nonetheless, all of the lintels feature centrally-placed keystones.



Detail: Fieldstone wall and fireplace with distinctive lintel. (photo: John Harwood)

Looking at the Jackson House, with its provocative melding of new and old, one begins to understand what Noyes meant when he paradoxically characterized his and his circle's designs as being "on the conservative side of the avant-garde."

—John Harwood

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Henry H., followed his father's footsteps to the University of Pennsylvania, and after ending his military service in the 1950s, joined his father in practice. Prior to 615 Peachtree Street, Smith had served as an architect to First National on numerous projects. The city's widening of North Avenue, and subsequent narrowing of the bank's property at the adjacent intersection prompted the new commission. The client decided to raze an existing branch bank on site and develop the property for commercial office space.

According to Henry H. Smith, the design proposed by him and his father attempted to maximize rental space on the narrow site. Their concept also utilized a passive solar design. The slab-like building's monumental east and west elevations noticeably lack windows. This design avoided the intense solar heat gain at those exposures, and instead provided glazing at only the south and north elevations. The majority of the office spaces were ideally configured for southern exposure. The curtain wall for the south elevation was a natural choice in satisfying the space demands of the office market. Henry traveled to Canada to tour new installations of the still-experimental building system. During this trip he witnessed the use of decorative metal panels within curtain wall designs. Following the determination of a weather-resistant finish, Henry specified red panels within the building's facade design to contrast the uniform white marble panels on east and west elevations (the panels are currently painted grey). At the building's base, non-domestic blue-grey granite was used in conjunction with an elaborate installation of decorative metal sunscreens.

## The Walter and Ruby Behlen House (cont'd from cover page)

the principal architect, designed an irregularly-shaped building with an extremely large footprint of 8,500 square feet. On a corner, its public façades are dominated by a three-car-wide solid redwood garage door on the south and, on the west, a set of thirteen full-height windows featuring motorized vertical louvers that operate by a household switch. The distinctive, sculptural

house, but in order to prevent the lights from buzzing, the ballasts were placed in the furnace room.

Walter Behlen and his particular combination of scientific knowledge and creativity personify this house. No one else could have built it. It perfectly symbolizes his life's work and his ingenuity.

—Jill Dolberg



**Family room with natatorium visible through glass doors at right**

*(photo: David Murphy, image courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society)*

curves of the corrugated panels create an exceptional play of light and shadow.

On the interior, the family room and natatorium were designed to be large and open, naturally flowing into one another. Even the swimming pool was built of the structural steel panels. The Behlen house is beautifully trimmed in elegant and rich materials. The foyer features Burmese teak paneling, closet doors, and boxed beams. The foyer floor and the mantel in the formal living room are travertine. Maria Kipp, a prominent artist who created textiles for the Beverly Hills Hotel and Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City, designed the drapery for the living room. Custom-made carpets were woven by V'Soske. Several modern pieces of furniture accentuate the house, including two Dunbar benches, a Herman Miller desk, and chairs by both Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen. The kitchen and laundry room are outfitted in St. Charles cabinetry in peach and seafoam green.

Structurally, the Behlen house was overbuilt, almost as if it had been constructed for industrial purposes—or an engineer's dream. The house utilizes over sixteen miles of single-conductor wire and three-phase 220 circuits, the same as was used on the battleship *Missouri*. The house was built on a concrete slab, with only 1/4" inch variance from end to end. Fluorescent lights were used throughout the



**Detail: corrugated 16-in steel panels**

*(photo: David Murphy, image courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society)*

**Editor's Note:** Control of the home was recently returned to the Behlen family after the state Attorney General ruled that the title had not been properly transferred from the family to the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS). Furthermore, Nebraska state officials declined to approve acceptance of the home for use as a state-operated historic site, despite its listing on



**Natatorium, with steel paneled ceiling**

*(photo: David Murphy, image courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society)*

the National Register of Historic Places and a six-figure monetary donation by the Behlen family for continual maintenance of the house. At present, the NSHS board has "given up whatever intentions it might have had in developing this home as a state historical site." Although the future of the Behlen House remains uncertain, it is speculated that the house will most likely be offered for sale.



## Chapter News

The ground floor banking hall was finished with travertine floors accented with red grout. The building also included a radiant heat and cooling system, a novelty for the time.

Today, Henry Smith regards the building as the most significant in his career. It was the last major project designed with his father before his death in 1970.

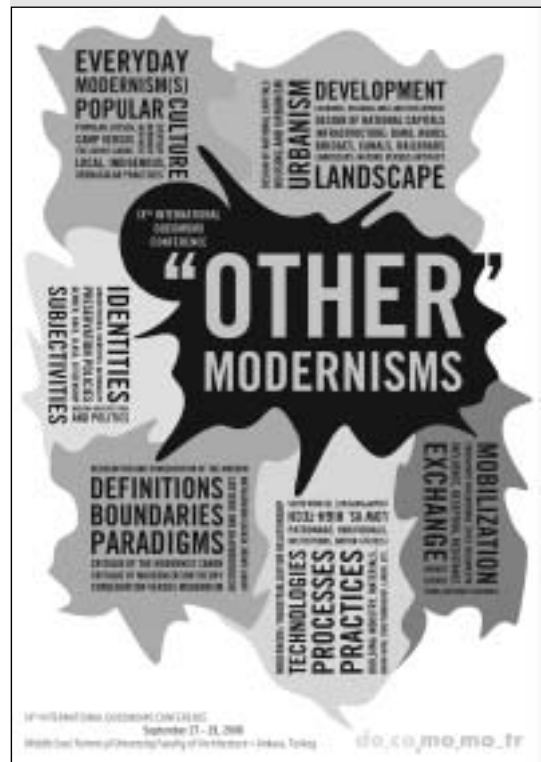
—Jon Buono

### On The Beltline: A Survey of Historic Resources

At the February Georgia Chapter meeting, Doug Young, Principal Planner with the Atlanta Urban Design Commission (AUDC) and Brandy Morrison, Thurston Fellow for the AUDC, presented findings from a survey of historic resources along the proposed route of the Beltline, a 22-mile loop of historic railroad right-of-way connecting 45 in-town neighborhoods with parks, transit and trails for commuters, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Among resources identified in the survey, conducted by Georgia State University students, are numerous modern sites, the majority of identified resources dating from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Many residential and commercial developments have been announced along the route, most coming after creation of a Tax Allocation District - raising concerns over possible loss of historic resources (more about this plan at [www.beltline.org](http://www.beltline.org)). The AUDC is using survey findings to help inform planning efforts related to the Beltline.

With over fifty attendees, the presentation and following discussion demonstrated the local

## Announcements



### IXth International DOCOMOMO Conference Istanbul/Ankara, Turkey

The IXth International DOCOMOMO Conference, "Other" Modernisms, will be hosted by DOCOMOMO Turkey National Working Party at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkey on September 27-29, 2006, with pre-conference workshops and tours in Istanbul on September 18-26 and post-conference events in Ankara on September 30-October 1. The conference will feature a dynamic set of papers that addresses the "other" modernisms—those that are not typically categorized along with the more recognizable paradigms of the modern movement—in their full diversity, including sub-themes that explore the borderless and timeless qualities of the "other," the relationship between modern architecture and the making of both individual and collective identities, and how modern interventions shape large-scale urban environments, rural hinterlands, as well as entire settlements and habitats. Sub-themes are: Definitions, Boundaries, Paradigms; Mobilization and Exchange; Identities and Subjectivities; Technologies, Processes, Practices; Urbanism, Development, Landscape; and Everyday Modernism(s) and Popular Culture. Papers will be presented in two parallel sessions September 27- 29. Posters will be displayed throughout the conference and discussed in-depth at two sessions. The general council meeting will be held on September 28 at METU, and a closing party will conclude the conference on September 29. Post-conference events will be held in Ankara, including tours of modern residential areas, administrative quarters, and individual buildings.

The pre-conference workshop, "How to Preserve a Housing Utopia: the Documentation

and Sustainability of Modern Heritage," will focus on Ataköy, Istanbul's early suburban mass housing development. Participants will study and evaluate this settlement area in relation to documentation and conservation issues.

A two-day program of tours in Istanbul on September 24-25 will highlight individual buildings such as Karaköy Harbor Passenger Terminal (R. Gorbun, 1937), Turkish Monopoly Liquor Factory (R. Mallet-Stevens, 1931), and incorporate a half-day boat tour along the Bosphorus (Istanbul Strait focusing on modern residential architecture. An evening welcome party is scheduled for September 25 at the Istanbul Modern Museum, while the International Specialist Committee (ISC) meetings are scheduled for September 26 at Istanbul Technical University.

For updates, registration, and other information, visit the conference website at [www.docomomo.org.tr](http://www.docomomo.org.tr).

—Diane De Fazio

### Two S.O.M. Buildings in the Balance: The Hostess House and the Gunner's Mates School at Great Lakes Naval Station



Hostess House, Great Lakes Naval Station, IL  
(photo: Cody Wright)

The Great Lakes Naval Station project in Great Lakes, Illinois, was the first military project of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM). The **Hostess House (Building 42)** was designed by Gordon Bunshaft and completed around 1942. It remains the only extant building designed by Bunshaft from the pre-war years. This building is an exceptional testament to the development of both the firm and modern American architecture. The rectangular building sits on a long narrow site, encompassing diverse programs including a reading and writing room, reception room, lounge, terrace, and offices. The roof consists of a series of laminated wood frames, which are supported at both ends by steel columns. The exposed wood trusses project through both façades, uniting inside and outside, creating a dynamic atmosphere.

(cont'd on next page)

## Chapter News

interest in historic preservation, including modern resources, as part of Beltline planning. The event was hosted by a local developer, J.C. Knight Properties, in a mid-twentieth-century warehouse adjacent to the Beltline, recently adapted for residential use.

—Thomas F. Little

### Beyond the Perimeter: Modern Architecture in Rural Georgia

In March, Steven Moffson, Architectural Historian with the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, discussed work that the Division has done to identify modern buildings in Georgia's small towns and Fall Line cities. Drawing upon the department's growing archive of images, Moffson's presentation demonstrated the wealth of mid-twentieth-century and modern sites found through Georgia, ranging from a 1950's-era bomb shelter to innovative mill buildings.

The presentation touched on several issues related to preservation of mid-twentieth-century resources, including a specific look at one significant storefront's "modernization" removal by an owner, prior to HPD involvement. The presentation was followed by informal discussion and a question-and-answer session.

—Thomas F. Little

## Announcements

### Two S.O.M. Buildings in the Balance

(cont'd from previous page)



**Gunner's Mates School, Great Lakes Naval Station, IL**  
(photo: Cody Wright)

The **Gunner's Mates School (Building 521)**, designed by William Priestly and Bruce Graham of SOM, was completed in 1954. The school building is a large blue-green glass box with slim steel mullions. Whereas the firm's previous curtain walls were designed by the New York office, Gunner's Mates was the first by the Chicago office. The approach seen here, where the building appears more technological and practical than aesthetic, became a tradition in the Chicago office thereafter.

The function of Building 521 was to train the Navy's gunners, so the building incorporated classrooms and large open space in which various types of large and heavy weaponry could be operated for educational drills. The designers came up with an ingenious solution: a building within a building, in this case, a concrete building (for classrooms and service facilities) located within the glass "shell." It divides the whole volume into two large interior open spaces used for the simulations. Balconies projected from the core serve as circulation paths and observation platforms for demonstrations. While the interior space produces an airy atmosphere of dual spaces, from outside, the glass shell presents itself as one large volume, concealing its supporting framework behind the wall.

—Hyun-Tae Jung

**Editor's Note:** *The viability of Buildings 42 and 521 is currently in question. Great Lakes' base presently operates with more than 180,000 square feet of excess administrative space and more than 300,000 square feet of extra training space, and two or three buildings are demolished each year. On May 18, 2006, the Department of the Navy issued its first notice of Environmental Assessment (EA) for the two structures, a move which is usually a precursor to demolition. At present, DOCOMOMO-Chicago/Midwest, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA), the National Trust, and other advocacy groups are working to save the buildings. Neither building is*

*listed on the National Register, but IHPA believes that both sites are potentially eligible, despite the Navy's characterization of Building 42 as "nondescript and unlikely to possess...cultural significance." Under federal law, the Navy is required to first prove there is no feasible or prudent alternative use for the sites before government funds can be allocated for razing the structures. The Navy will review public comment received by Tuesday, June 20, 2006.*

### The Future of Mies van der Rohe's Only Library Building, and His Only Work in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C.'s mayor is planning to lease out the Mies van der Rohe-designed Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library for 99 years, in order to pay for construction of a new central library on a redevelopment site one block to the north. If approved by the DC Council, these plans will take the most publicly-accessible building in Mies' oeuvre in the U.S. out of public hands, and could result in the building's alteration or demolition.

The 420,000 s.f. black metal and bronze-tinted glass building was designed by famed modern architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to be capable of serving, with the addition of a fifth story, as the city's central library for 150 years.



**Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, D.C.**

(photo: Alexander M. Padro)

The structure, named for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., following a petition and letter writing campaign urging the designation, opened in 1972 and was celebrated by critics as the best public building in Washington.

As a result of the District of Columbia's chronic budgetary woes, and spending less than a third of the national average on library building maintenance for over three decades, the MLK Library has deteriorated. Among the signs of neglect are stained and threadbare carpeting, inoperative drinking fountains, long-abandoned dumbwaiter and pneumatic tube stations, and trouble-prone air conditioning and elevators. Much of the library's valuable Mies-designed furniture has been discarded.

(cont'd on next page)

## Chapter News

### CHICAGO/MIDWEST

#### Winter Lecture and Tour



Seventeenth Church of Christ,  
Scientist, Chicago, IL, 1968  
(photo: Flora Chou)

Our March 6 event was a sold-out tour and lecture on Harry Weese and Associates' 1968 design of the Seventeenth Church of Christ, Scientist in Chicago. Miles Galfer, a parishioner, escorted us through the building and into the auditorium—the building's primary worship space. He explained the significance of the sanctuary's semicircular plan, its tent-like ceiling, and clerestory windows in relation to the Christian Science faith. Architectural historian (and long-time member) Rolf Achilles' lecture was held at the offices of Perkins + Will in Mies van der Rohe's IBM Building (1971), overlooking the church. In his talk, Mr. Achilles placed the design of Seventeenth Church within the context of ancient and contemporary houses of worship, ranging from the Pantheon in Rome (ca. 125 AD) to Eero Saarinen's North Church in Columbus, Indiana (1964).

A stunning combination of travertine, glass, and plaster, the Seventeenth Church of Christ, Scientist sits at the corner of Wacker Drive and Wabash Avenue in the heart of the Chicago's "Loop." The two-story height and rounded façade stands in stark contrast to the towering rectilinear skyscrapers

## Announcements

In 2000, AIA local chapter volunteers prepared a renovation proposal in the Miesian idiom that would create a new skylit atrium in the center of the building, a large reading room on the second floor, a new theatre-style auditorium, art galleries and meeting rooms, and an additional, fifth floor with space for public events. At the time, Mayor Anthony A. Williams supported the plan. The city could completely renovate the MLK Library for about half of what a new, smaller library a block away would cost.

Most frustrating to preservationists is the refusal on the part of the city's Historic Preservation Review Board to schedule a hearing on the nomination filed in 2005 for the MLK Library to be listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites, which would grant the building the highest level of legal protection available, and require significant review of any proposed alterations.

The MLK Library is currently on the DC Preservation League's most recent list of the 10 Most Endangered Places in Washington. Preservationists and activists with the local chapter of the Recent Past Preservation Network, the DC Library Renaissance Project, and other groups have been promoting the renovation of the current central library building. Activities have included an exhibition at the library, presentations at annual historical studies and architectural history conferences, and by testifying before the DC Council.

The DC Council is expected to vote on the MLK Library lease legislation in July 2006.

For more information, visit:

[www.recentpast.org](http://www.recentpast.org) and  
[www.savedlibraries.org](http://www.savedlibraries.org).

—Alexander M. Padro, DC Representative,  
Recent Past Preservation Network

### The End of Bell Laboratories?

Preservation of the Bell Laboratories facility in Holmdel, NJ (1962), representative of the architectural oeuvre of the modernist Eero Saarinen (1910-61), is of utmost importance. As prime example of a post-war corporate campus, Bell Labs integrates modern office space into the landscape and approaches novel building materials and office planning innovatively. Its rectangular building mass, clad in a mirror-glazed curtain wall, reflects the pastoral landscape designed around it and provides a serene and functional working space for scientists. Bell Labs chose the site in the 1930s because it was free of man-made static noise that had become problematic at its other locations. Eero Saarinen, known for his TWA terminal and St. Louis' Gateway Arch, designed not only the main facility, but also the site's distinctive water tower and landscaping elements. Carefully considered partitions organize the interior into an effective communicational network of quiet laboratories and linking pathways. Flexibility, adaptable

laboratories, central common facilities, minimal foot traffic, central air-conditioning, short walking distances from parking lots to building, roadways free of outside traffic and low construction and operating costs were major concerns and achievements of the design. Among the building's more innovative components is the use of mirrored glass, intended to reflect the landscape, minimize the building's enormity, and reduce heat gain. At time of construction, the manufacturer could not produce enough glass for the entire exterior, but the success of its heat gain capacity (admits 25% of light, deflects 70% of heat) led to covering the entire building resulting in the popularity of the form for office and research buildings.

The innovative materials and structure of the building demonstrate a pioneering example of office design and organization of working space that would later become the norm. Bell Labs is thus a significant part of the history of corporate America. In these laboratories, Bell scientists have played a pivotal role in inventing future communication technologies, communication satellites, optical communication systems, digital signal processors, Unix operating system, touch-tone dialing, and cellular telephone technology. Thus, the building is an important monument of not only the history of modern architecture but also the histories of science and post-war America. Therefore, it is important not only to preserve the façade but also the building as an organizational complex.

—Susanna Santala

**Editor's Note:** *The former Bell Labs facility (now home to Lucent Technologies) has been acquired by a developer and will be demolished some time in 2007. Renovation was considered for the site, but it was determined to be "absolutely and utterly unusable" for current office space purposes, according to an official at the development corporation. Introduction of new housing, however, is not supported by either the community or the developer, who has affirmed that any new construction on site will have commercial applications. Saarinen's water tower, designed to resemble a transistor invented by Nobel Prize-winning scientists at Bell Labs, will remain. The six-story, two-million-square-foot structure may be open to the public for tours before it closes (date to be determined), and an open meeting about the property will be held on site during the last week of June 2006.*

*Bell Labs is a developing story. Please check our website, [www.docomomo-us.org](http://www.docomomo-us.org) for more information.*

## Chapter News

that surround it. Given the AIA Chicago 25 Year Award in 1996, the building was praised not only for the exterior, but also for its auditorium.

The event was very timely, as local newspapers were printing reports of the building's potential sale. The rumors were quickly dashed by church board members, who denied any future possibilities of sales.

### Traditional Building Exhibit and Preservation Roundtable

Our participation in the Traditional Building Conference and Exhibit held in Chicago April 5-8 was a great success! Most visitors to our booth were not immediately familiar with DOCOMOMO, but (once given an introduction to its mission and activities) quickly signed up to receive our local e-newsletter. Numerous visitors from neighboring states, including Minnesota, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, were very excited about our presence and about coordinating activities with our chapter.

During the conference, DOCOMOMO-US board member Laura Culberson Knapp (recently relocated from Northern California to Chicago) participated in the AIA's Historic Resources Committee Preservation Roundtable. Laura described the mission and activities of DOCOMOMO at both the national and international level. There was quite a bit of interest in our organization with many attendees and presenters from local, regional, and national organizations expressing concern regarding the future of our modern-era resources.

## A Modernist House for an American Red: William Lescaze's Field House



Field House, New Hartford, CT  
(photo: Dietrich Neumann)

**W**illiam Lescaze's Field House in New Hartford, Connecticut (1930) was built for millionaire Frederick Vanderbilt Field. They became friends in the late 1920s, having met in leftist intellectual circles in New York. In his autobiography, **From Right to Left**, Vanderbilt recalled how he told Lescaze that he and his wife wanted to live without servants, have easy transitions between inside and out, and have plenty of space for books and undisturbed study. The house, Field wrote, "had as part of the living-dining area two cubicles, just like the carrels of a research library, the walls were lined with books and desks were built into them...The house received so much publicity that on weekends during the first year, busloads of architectural students would burst in upon us with sketchbooks in hand." Field, who owned the house for 47 years, was visited there by H. G. Wells, Lillian Hellman, and by many others who shared his progressive political views. The house survives in fairly good condition. The first floor features a living room, a kitchen, and bedrooms with access to a large terrace; a later addition was constructed in the back.

The architectural historian William H. Jordy noted the pragmatism of Lescaze's modernism, admiring the house's "austerity and simplicity, the directness of the plan....The directness of the expression of what is most essential to the program." Lescaze's nonchalance in the application of the Lally columns made Jordy's point: "in their scatter, their varied heights, their toothpick lack of presence, their prosaic and localized functions... they revert to the vernacular and appear as the



Detail, Field House, New Hartford, CT  
(photo: Dietrich Neumann)

Lally columns [that] they really are." In his book, **On Being an Architect** (1941), Lescaze had similarly claimed a commitment to the kind of direct, pragmatic functionalism that he recognized in the simple barns of Connecticut. There, one often encountered "a free-standing wooden post (ancestor of the Lally column) holding up the second floor," creating thus, with simple means, a practical, dry, and sheltered space. Like Richard Neutra and many other American architects of the time, Lescaze stressed a modern regionalism and a more practical and less formal approach to architecture than those put forth at the 1932 MoMA exhibition. The Field House serves as a telling example.

—Dietrich Neumann

## Chapter News

### Recent Past Resources Seminar

DOCOMOMO-Chicago/Midwest members participated in a two-day "Survey and Safeguarding the Recent Past" seminar during the first weekend in April. Sponsored by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) and the Village of Oak Park, attendees came from local governments and preservation commissions to learn more about modern architecture in their communities and the survey activities of the Illinois Initiative on Recent Past Architecture (IIRPA). IIRPA, a partnership of multiple organizations spearheaded by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois (LPCI) and DOCOMOMO-Chicago/Midwest, was formed in July 2005 to organize and conduct a survey of recent past buildings and sites located throughout Illinois.

### DOCOMOMO Register Activity

Our register committee is hard at work on fiche development for entry into the new online DOCOMOMO register. We are also planning site visits this year to include our members and friends in the process.

As part of the Chicago/Midwest chapter's efforts to initiate DOCOMOMO activities in bordering Midwest states, a partnership with the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana (HLFI) has been formed. HLFI created its Landmarks of the Recent Past committee (LORP) and is initiating a survey of modern buildings located throughout Indiana. Many potential additions to DOCOMOMO's Register have already been identified and we will be participating in LORP's July meeting in Indianapolis.

—Julie McKeon and Lynette Stuhlmacher

## Portland, Oregon, Preserved Modern Houses Tour

For Oregon's preservationists, the sellout success of the recent **Street of Eames** tour in April, 2006, is a hopeful sign for the survival of mid-century modern houses. 600 people joined the tour and its affiliated events, demonstrating the growing appreciation for this important architectural legacy. The visit to six houses provided a unique opportunity to see quintessential examples of many modern styles and to follow their evolution from 1942 until today. Several were in the Northwest Style, a regional reaction to European modernism that emphasized detailed wood structures and connections to the area's unique light and landscapes.



Exterior, Joss House, Portland, OR  
(photo: Andrew Phillips)

The tour visited an early project by Pietro Belluschi, which showed how Portland's master architect incorporated new forms into traditional architecture, developing a complex understanding of the environment of the Northwest and creating a style unique to it. In the **Joss House** (1940), Belluschi worked with a committed client on a small budget. Avoiding the peak of a hill, he sited the house at the base of a small ridge where its low roofline seamlessly blends into the landscape creating intimate interior scenes.

In the **Power House** (1946), Herman Brookman, a renowned designer of traditional estates, faced a challenge when he designed a modern house to be sited among traditional mansions in the Tudor and Colonial styles. The front façade can be viewed as a compromise. The Roman brick

cladding and relatively low roofline are evocative of the Northwest Regional Style, but the overall effect is one of expanse and presence.

Van Evera Bailey's **Dixon House** (1952) is a fine example of this regional style. Perched on steel posts (including its circular driveway), the house is a dramatic solution to the site conditions and a marvel of modern engineering. The public spaces are focused on the outdoors with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a beautiful woodland setting. The damp climate has caused problems for the house's wood siding and construction; although houses like it can suffer from irreparable damage from moss, dry rot, and moisture, the Dixon House is beautifully preserved.

**Rummer GB-276** (today, the Miller/Cho House, 1967), was built by the developer Robert Rummer in Oak Hills, Portland's first planned subdivision. It follows the Eichler style of suburban housing developments. Derivative in style, yet innovative for the region, the houses sold quickly. They just as quickly fell victim to the weather: roofs and doors leaked, sub-floor heating failed, and the residences became virtually impossible to insure. Remodeled and updated with sensitivity to the original design, the Miller/Cho House illustrates the livability of the Eichler-derived model.

Today's architects continue to look to these modernist structures as they reinvigorate Portland's architectural landscape with contemporary buildings. Some of these structures were included in the tour. By reaching back into the mid-twentieth-century's modern legacy, the local architectural community can learn from these successes and failures to create a style of complementary modernism that is perfectly suited to the lush environment of the Pacific Northwest.

A second tour is planned for next April.

Visit [www.streetofeames.org](http://www.streetofeames.org).

—Christine Baldrice



Dixon House, Portland, OR  
(photo: Mark Senffner)

## Chapter News

### WESTERN WASHINGTON

DOCOMOMO WEWA officially launched its new website on May 23rd during a reception at the Design Within Reach studio in downtown Seattle. The new site, designed by Wolken Communica, was made possible by generous contributions from the National Trust, Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, and King County's 4Culture. (See [www.docomomo-wewa.org](http://www.docomomo-wewa.org).)

Many tours are scheduled for 2006, including a thin shell concrete office building designed by NBBJ and homes designed by Norm Johnston and Paul Kirk. In September of 2006, DOCOMOMO WEWA will host a "Tacoma Modernism" tour. The tour will include many residential and commercial properties including the headquarters of Concrete Technology Corporation. This company has been responsible for the construction of many innovative concrete structures in the Northwest.

An on-going effort by DOCOMOMO WEWA volunteers will result in the nomination of the Omar Mithun-designed Wegner-Luce House in Issaquah.

DOCOMOMO WEWA meets each month, typically on the last Wednesday of the month at different locations in Seattle and the surrounding region. Please contact [info@docomomo-wewa.org](mailto:info@docomomo-wewa.org) for additional information.

—Andrew Phillips

## The Van Nelle Factory Saved

Upon its completion in 1930, the Van Nelle Factory, designed by Brinkman and Van der Vlugt, was recognized internationally as one of the most remarkable examples of modern architecture in The Netherlands. Developed not only as a statement of modern production efficiency and architectural design, the building also represented the economic, technical, social, and cultural ideas of the time. It is this unique combination of technical advances and social responsibility that makes the building such an important monument today. In the recent restoration and adaptive re-use, some of that original spirit has been maintained by transforming this coffee, tea, and tobacco factory into a 'design factory' where different design disciplines and industries work together and share facilities. The use and design have visually and intellectually recaptured some of the inspiration that made the Van Nelle Factory unique at the time.

The success story of this restoration and adaptive re-use has been captured in the book **Van Nelle: Monument in Progress** published in 2005 by the publisher Van Hef in Rotterdam. Not only is the renovation and restoration described in great detail but so also is the original design and construction. The instrumental role of Kees van der Leeuw, who was the director at the time and whose family founded Van Nelle at the end of the eighteenth century, is explained. Van der Leeuw, the same one who commissioned Richard Neutra to design the VDL house, was a remarkable man and his ideas about manufacturing—developed during his various visits to the U.S.—his theological beliefs, and social views set the tone for many of the original design decisions.



**Coffee roasting hall remodeled as a conference center**  
(photo courtesy of Faz Keuzenkamp)

The book is a compilation of chapters written by various authors including several DOCOMOMO members. For instance, Marieke Kuipers, who for many years has been active in the ISC for Registers, describes in detail the survey work done by the Dutch Conservation Service in close cooperation with the Sara Lee Company, the parent of the Van Nelle Company today. Wessel de Jong, a founding member of DOCOMOMO International and for many years its secretary



**Van Nelle: Monument in Progress**  
(Coen Sligting Book Import)

general, details the design and restoration process. Mariël Polman describes the importance and selection of color in great detail: because color was such an important consideration in the original design, extensive on-site and laboratory research was conducted.

Finally, the successful completion was also in large part the result of a unique cooperation in a private-public partnership in which both the Sara Lee Corporation, the private developer, and the various regulatory agencies participated. The building was ultimately turned over by Sara Lee to a new partnership, which is responsible for the operation, leasing, and continued restoration and sympathetic development of the site. The title of the book, **Van Nelle: Monument in Progress**, indicates that much work still remains to be done.

**Van Nelle: Monument in Progress** is an important book. It gives, for the first time, a detailed history of the development of the original design and construction of a building that is, by all standards, important. The book is also significant because it provides a detailed description of the design and real estate development process that may serve if not as an example then certainly as an inspiration. Too often, the buildings of the recent past are dismissed as temporal or out of date. However, here is an example of a building and its restoration that both architecturally and philosophically proves that premise wrong. It is appropriate that the building has been nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage List.

—Theodore Prudon

### **Van Nelle: Monument in Progress**

Rotterdam, Uitgeverij De Hef, 2005

ISBN 90-6906-038-8

Approximately 300 pages and 400 colour and black-and-white illustrations, hardbound 69.90 euros (shipping not included)

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**Newsletter Staff**

**Guest Editor**

Hélène Lipstadt

**Assistant Editor**

Diane De Fazio

**Graphic Designer**

Unjoo Noh

**Contributors**

Christine Baldrice  
 Jon Buono  
 Flora Chou  
 Diane De Fazio  
 Jill Dolberg  
 Gabriel Field  
 David Fixler  
 John Harwood  
 Hansel Hernandez-Navarro  
 Hyun-Tae Jung  
 Thomas F. Little  
 Julie McKeon  
 Mary McLeod  
 Dietrich Neumann  
 Alexander M. Padro  
 Andrew Phillips  
 Andrew Roman  
 Susanna Santala  
 Mark Senffner  
 Lynette Stuhlmacher  
 Cody Wright

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**A Modern House's Happy Fate** *(cont'd from pg. 6)*

and a former playroom, which now serves as the office of the Witte-Whiting firm, WW Architecture, on the lower level. The master bedroom is, according to the Times, "small by today's standards, [but] for the new owners, the room's architectural qualities, including walls of wood (instead of Sheetrock) and two facing ribbons of glass, are compensation."

The Times' report on the unique sales arrangement will perhaps inspire others to follow suit. The rate of modernist houses demolished for larger, more conventional dwellings in Princeton is high, fuelled by escalating land values. Witte recalled that School of Architecture Dean Stan Allen took them to view houses on the market in Princeton, but, "Stan would say, 'There's a nice modernist house just around the bend,' and then we'd turn the corner and we'd see a lot where the house had just been torn down." Most of

Longstreth's legacy (much of it built for Princeton faculty and members of the Institute for Advanced Study) survives, but the public library he designed in the community's core was demolished in 2002. Longstreth eschewed publicity, including publications, so his buildings are known primarily by the limited number of people who occupy or visit them. Richard Longstreth, Director of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at George Washington University, donated his father's office records to the Architectural Archive at the University of Pennsylvania in 1996 in the hopes that his legacy would eventually become more widely appreciated and to also assist property owners in making repairs and alterations that are sympathetic to the original design.

—Richard Longstreth

**Easy Living** *(cont'd from pg. 6)*

when a Womb chair has the same wear as the house itself, it feels like a real chair rather than a "piece" on display. But I believe that it's the house itself that creates this particular atmosphere. The bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchen are not large by contemporary standards, but that is partly what makes them comfortable, and the views make each room extraordinary. It's a house that is easy to live in: the spaces flow easily, the proportions are easy, the structure is simple, the views are easy to admire again, and again, and again. It all works *perfectly*, without making

"work" at all evident. Everyone who's entered the house has been immediately put at ease. It's a vacation house for a 365 day/year vacation. It's remarkable to me that even now, after living here for almost a year, the house surrounds us with an aura of comfort inside and awe at the views outside every day. Yes, a 5:00 PM cocktail seems especially appropriate in such a setting, but it's the house itself that offers the most constant refreshment and no magazine needs to tell me that.

—Sarah Whiting

**Upcoming Conferences & Events**

**Lecture: "Infinitely Fresh, Infinitely New:" Echoes Of Richard Neutra and Los Angeles Architecture in Europe**

Santa Monica Museum of Art  
 Santa Monica, CA  
 July 6, 2006

**Lecture: Julius Shulman, Modernity, and the Metropolis**

National Building Museum  
 Washington, D.C.  
 July 26, 6:30–8:00 pm

**How to Preserve a Modern Utopia: The Documentation and Sustainability of Modern Heritage Case Study: Ataköy-Istanbul**

Workshop in conjunction with the IXth International DOCOMOMO Conference  
 Istanbul, Turkey  
 September 23–26, 2006

**"Other Modernisms"**

IXth International DOCOMOMO Conference  
 Istanbul / Ankara, Turkey  
 September 27–29, 2006

**Exhibits**

**Cityscapes Revealed: Highlights from the Collection**

National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.  
 Ongoing

**Norman Foster: Space and Time The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts**

Moscow  
 Through July 2, 2006

**Álvaro Siza/Architect: Drawings, Models, Photographs**

Santa Monica Museum of Art  
 Santa Monica, CA  
 Through August 19, 2006

**Julius Shulman, Modernity and Metropolis**

National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.  
 Opening July 30, 2006

**Best of Friends: R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi**

The Noguchi Museum  
 Queens, NY  
 Through October 15, 2006

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NATIONAL NEWS  
summer 2006



**Behlen House, Columbus, NE, 1958.**  
**Detail: corrugated 16-in steel panels**  
*(photo: David Murphy, image courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society)*

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docomomo-newengland@hushmail.com  
dflxler@ey.pae.com  
lipstadt@mit.edu

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