

# ASHP NEWS

Volume Three, No. 3

Spring, 1991

## The Restoration of Villard Hall

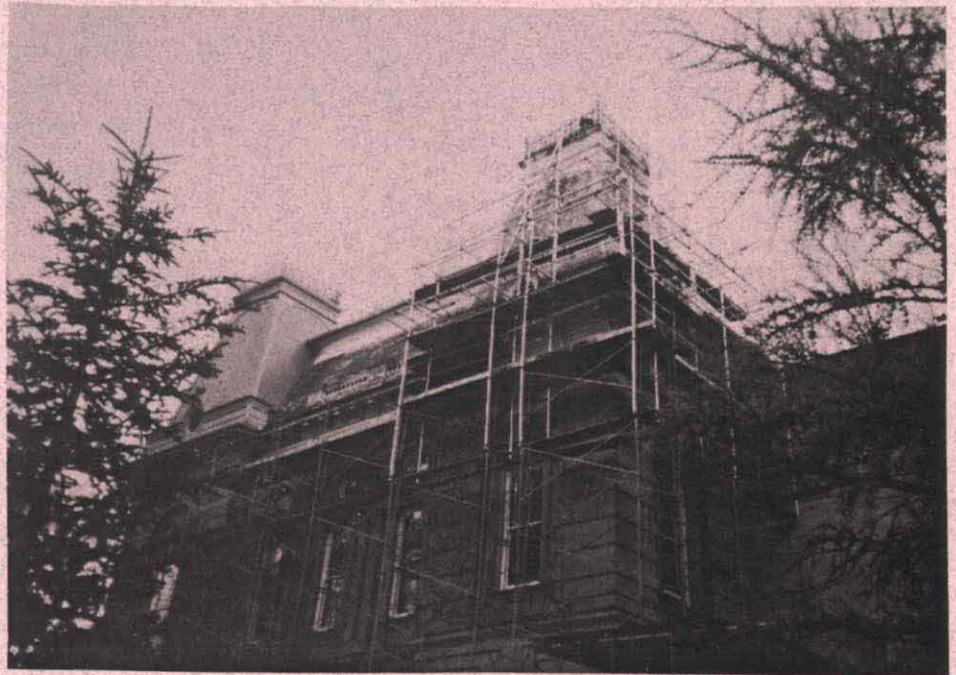
by Dena Sanford

The University of Oregon's Second Empire Style Villard Hall is once again enveloped in scaffolding as a class offered by the Historic Preservation Program begins work on the restoration of the northwest tower. This is the third phase in an on-going plan to restore the 105 year old building, the second oldest structure on campus.

The class is being taught by restoration carpenter Gregg Olson, who has over 10 years restoration experience in Oregon. Olson also oversaw the first two phases of the Villard Hall work: the 1988 east porch, and the 1989 restoration of the northeast tower.

Students working with Olson and the University of Oregon's Physical Plant have been introduced to various aspects of preservation that they might otherwise never have experienced. These include the development of critical path diagrams to organize and identify the process of building restoration, and to create a system of identification for the disassembled elements. Students have also participated in the design of scaffolding placement, and learned techniques of disassembling wooden ornamentation, paint removal, shop woodworking, finish carpentry, and the reconstruction and reassembly of deteriorated elements.

The natural wear of 105 years, combined with deferred maintenance and poor choices for materials replacement have compromised the integrity of the northwest tower. The worst damage appears on the south and west elevations; those most exposed to rain and ultraviolet degradation. Shingles have lost most of their protective paint, and insufficient drainage has allowed water to penetrate behind the wood detailing, affecting the wooden structural members and interior brick parapet. The lack of proper drainage



Villard Hall on the University of Oregon campus, Eugene.

has also damaged part of the north facade gutter and elaborate cornice detailing. Some modillions have even become detached. This situation necessitated the removal of several modillions, brackets, soffits, moldings, and other structural members. While as much original material will be retained as possible, new elements are being created from in-kind materials of the original material as possible. The iron cresting, for example, will be sandblasted. Replacement cast iron pieces will be attached where needed, and the entire assembly primed, repainted and reinstalled.

All of the surviving lead paint is being removed from the tower, and all the elements primed and repainted. In some instances, the removal of paint has revealed pencil marks made by the 1885 builders. A method for applying the final sand coat was perfected by students working on the northeast tower in 1989. At that time, students used

bellows to spray on the final coat, using sand collected from the nearby McKenzie River, which was nearly identical to the sand used in the original coat.

Each phase of the Villard Hall restoration has presented its own unique problems. One intriguing issue for the present project has been how to design and construct two elaborate six foot urns which embellished the balustrade from 1886 to about 1904. Insufficient anchorage for the urns, which may have weighed up to 300 pounds each, was probably the cause of their removal, and is a prime factor in considering a strong and reliable method of attachment for the replacements. One design solution has been an internal steel frame within a hollow, barrel-like urn. Top, solid sections measuring about two feet in diameter would be turned on a specially-designed lathe capable of holding such a large object.



Theories in restoration are another aspect in the Villard Hall project. Through Olson's "Socratic" approach to teaching, students discuss such subjects as the merits of replacing in-kind, rather than with modern materials; and decisions as to replacing or restoring later modification to the building. As an exercise in "above ground archaeology," Olson presents the issue of "disguising" the present work, or leaving a record for future restorers to enable them to recognize what had been done in 1991.

Restoration of the northwest tower will continue through the Summer quarter.

### Editors' Notes

It would seem we barely got started, and the end of the quarter is only a few weeks away. The final issue of volume three is in your hands, and will hopefully continue in the fall. With only Queen Paula (1990 class student body) available to take over every ASHP office, the task of orienting new editors will have to wait for the incoming students.

We hope the new graduate students will have an interest in continuing the newsletter, as it is the only true "voice" we have to reach the rest of the preservation community, and a tradition worth keeping. We are happy to report that there has been an increased interest shown in the last few months regarding submission of articles to the newsletter. It has always been our intent to provoke a response from our readers, and not just report on the happenings around our bit of the country.

Have a good summer, and see you in the fall.

Hugs,

Dena and Donna

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### News Update

Our last issue of *ASPH News* featured an article about a barn in Cottage Grove, Oregon, and its potential nomination to the National

Register for its unique advertisement concerning DR. PIERCE'S PLEASANT PELLETS. As of May 17, 1991, the Oregon State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation has given their recommendation for the barn's nomination. The nomination is now on its way to the Keeper of the Register in Washington, D. C., for the final stamp of approval!

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### The President Speaks

The 1990-1991 school year has about come to a close, and next year a very different group of students will be running the show.

Several current students, myself included, plan to complete our theses over the summer and defend during the first few weeks of the fall quarter. At the same time, we expect a large group of new students. Out of 29 applicants for admission next year, 15 have been sent letters of acceptance by the Historic Preservation faculty.

Paula Cook will serve as their dauntless leader. She has been unanimously elected as the 1991-1992 ASHP President, or "Queen" as she likes to be known.

Meanwhile, ASHP members are involved in National Historic Preservation Week activities (May 12 - 18), as well as in planning a fall lecture seminar, and a group trip to the National Trust Conference to be held in San Francisco in October.

Thanks to all of you who have been so supportive of the ASHP this year - through comments, letters, articles, and financial contributions. We have appreciated these and I would like to encourage you to keep them coming!

*Timothy Nelson*



## Pioneer American Society Meeting Held in Williamsburg

by Jill Chappel

*This report was submitted by a U of O graduate in Historic Preservation, now working in Washington, D.C.. We were unfortunately unable to publish it until the Spring issue.*

The 22nd Annual Meeting of the Pioneer American Society was held in conjunction with the National Council For Geographic Education in Williamsburg, Virginia, November 7-10, 1990. The program, chaired by Dr. Marshall Bowen of Mary Washington College, was a potpourri of papers, banquets, and fieldtrips with participants mainly from Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, and North Carolina. Paper sessions included churches, gravestones, and burial practices; builders and designers; America's architectural heritage; concrete, gravel, and hay construction; vernacular architecture and the cultural landscape; mines, smelters, and industrial labor; and the settlement process. Dr. Fred Kniffen, Louisiana State University Professor Emeritus and the pioneer of east-west diffusion of vernacular house types, was scheduled to speak at the Friday evening banquet but was unable to attend at the last minute.

A special Pioneer America Society Saturday fieldtrip touring Virginia's James River plantations was lead by Carter Hudgins and Gary Stanton of the Historic Preservation Program at Mary Washington College. The tour, with stops at Shirley Plantation, Bacon's Castle, the Kitchen-Roberts House, Flowerdew Hundred, and the town of Smithfield, emphasized a critical look at agricultural outbuildings associated with the early Colonial plantations.

Abstracts of the conference may be obtained by writing to ASHP.



## Responding to Tourism in Charleston

by Tim Netsch

*The following article by our ASHP President won first place in a report on a student design competition held by the 1990 National Trust Conference on Historic Preservation. It originally appeared in the Spring, 1991 issue of the Preservation Forum Journal.*

Successful design within an historic setting hinges on the response to a range of issues as broad as the field of historic preservation itself. Such is the complexity of Charleston, South Carolina's proposed rehabilitation of the city's Camden Sheds as a Visitors Reception and Transportation Center (VRTC). The project, in its early stages at this time, coincided with the Trust's October 1990 National Conference and Sixth Annual Student Design Competition.

Tourism fills the heart of the preservationist with both joy and trembling. Perhaps no historic city knows this better than Charleston, mecca for those seeking the sublime gentility of the American South. Increasingly, however, visitors and residents alike are just as apt to experience an exhaust-belching throng of cars and buses.

Planners long ago recognized the impact which the automobile exerts on Charleston. It was, after all, the 1930s sacrifice of a valuable old building for a gas station that became a rallying point in the fight for the designation of Charleston's Old and Historic District -- the first in the nation. Charleston has a wonderful human scale because it was built to be used by pedestrians; it is an eminently walkable city.

The rise in tourism has become particularly acute within the last decade. John Meffert, Executive Director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, states that in recent years, "all [of the city's] preservation activities relate to limiting automobile access downtown." Planners have been calling for some means by which to coral automobiles since 1972, when interstate 26 linked Charleston more conveniently to the

rest of the nation. Several schemes were proposed and rejected until in 1984 a panel was established to develop goals and a master plan for the Visitors Reception and Transportation Center.

The intent is to draw tourists to a central facility before they reach Charleston's historic core, provide parking, and invite them to enter the city on locally regulated buses, or better yet, on foot. In addition, visitors will be introduced to the history and architecture of Charleston through printed and audio-visual materials.

The project is being developed on the site of the William Aiken House and Associated Railroad Structures National Historic Landmark. Here in the 1830s the South Carolina Railroad Company offered the first passenger rail service in the U.S.

Rehabilitation of historic railroad buildings has become increasingly popular in recent years. One of the most celebrated of these is Washington D.C.'s Union Station, which continues to serve rail travelers while offering new shops and restaurants. In nearly any small town one might find the Chamber of Commerce housed in an old depot. Structures not originally meant to shelter human beings, such as the Camden Sheds, often present special problems. Historical integrity and character must be preserved while accommodating partitions, heating and cooling, and other facilities.

The VRTC site is located within the Upper King Street neighborhoods. These areas are predominantly low income, and in 1989 rejected their inclusion in a proposed expansion of the adjacent historic district. Resident feared being priced out of their homes.

The VRTC development process has involved neighborhood associations from the beginning. The project is designed to serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of the area, particularly many now-vacant commercial structures. Retail and office space in the VRTC is meant to mix visitors with residents. Nearby elderly housing and an hotel are two proposed restoration projects already generated by the VRTC project. But

locals' fears of gentrification may yet be realized as new money filters into the area -- this made perhaps more dangerous without the protection a district designation would have afforded.

Several structures are now in the midst of rehabilitation. The Trust's Student Design Competition involved the Camden Sheds in particular. Their rehabilitation will mark the final phase of development. Portions of these freight storage buildings date to 1850. The design program calls for studio space for local craftspeople, a restaurant, a transportation museum, and the design of a new parking garage with retail and office space.

Participating students came from Auburn, Clemson, Louisiana State, and Tulane Universities, and the University of Tennessee. One design in particular, by Randy Eppich and Steve Cochran of Louisiana State, captured the attention of the jury. Juror Richard Longstreth, of George Washington University, characterized the design as being "responsive to the nature of what had been in the past." Indeed, this design differed from the others in its straightforward simplicity. The axis of the original railroad track is maintained. Minimal alterations are made to the sheds. The new parking garage mimics the linear form and orientation of the historic structures.

Above all, Eppich and Cochran's scheme celebrates the Camden Sheds and the rich history of the site. As Mayor Joseph Riley suggested, the VRTC will "Meet the transportation needs of one century with those of another." The design retains its utilitarian nature and introduces new buildings which harmonize rather than compete with those already existing. Fronting the garage on Meeting Street is retail and office space in the form of Charleston's unique building type, the Single House.

The winning entry went before a mock session of the Charleston Board of Architectural Review, where it was applauded for its restraint. While expressing reservations about the spacing of the Single House-form



buildings, the BAR gave conceptual approval to the design.

Concerning the competition entries, Jury Chairman Bernd Foerster noted that "There is no formula" for design within an historical context. Preservation encompasses issues economic, social, aesthetic, cultural and technical. A balance, however delicate, must be established in any preservation activity for a whole community to benefit.

The Visitors Reception and Transportation Center will ease a portion of the toll that tourism takes on Charleston. Sympathetic redevelopment of the site, such as Cochran and Eppich propose, will enable the VRTC itself to become part of the visitor's preservation education. Should the project and subsequent revitalization succeed in meeting the needs of current neighborhood residents, a victory will have been won which may not be so small; Charleston's accomplishments in preservation tend to establish precedent followed the nation over.

## Stage International Des Monuments Historiques

submitted by the Friends of Vieelles Maisons Francaises, Inc.

The third International Historic Buildings Training Session will again take place from the 27th of July through the 11th of August, building on efforts begun in 1988. The first training session took place during the first two weeks of August, 1988, at Saint Antoine l'Abbaye in Daupine (Isere) which was founded in the 11th century to receive the relics of St. Antoine the Hermit, brought back to France from Constantinople as a result of the Crusades. The many pilgrims on their way to St. Jacques de Compostelle, and those seeking miraculous cures for the dreaded ergot disease, known as St. Antoine's Fire, caused the development of the modern hospital system by the Antonin monks in the 13th century. As cures were found for this medieval disease, the order dwindled, and most of the buildings were gutted and deserted

by the 18th century. One of these buildings was selected for restoration.

The training sessions are financed by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Regional Council of the Department of Isere, Rhone-Alpes, and directed by Jean Louis Taupin and Didier Repellin, Head Architects of the Department of Isere and of Lyon (Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques). Fifteen students enrolled the first session, having theoretical experience or studies touching on architecture or restoration. They came from Belgium, Poland, Roumaina, Australia, U.S.A. and France.

The object of the first two week sessions was not to make the interns stonemasons or restorers, but to sensitize them to a better understanding of conservation problems. Each student worked three consecutive eight-hour days in a workshop before rotating to the next, and nearly every evening there were conferences given by restoration experts in French or English.

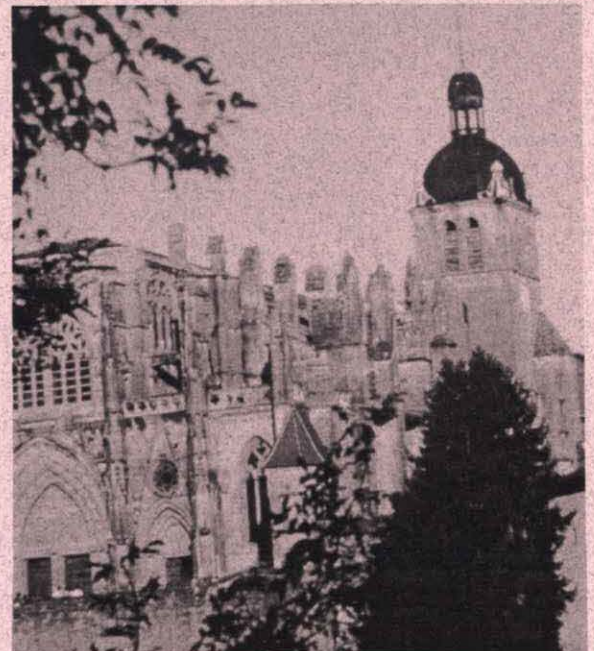
During the 1988 session, the delicate plaster sculpture in the dining hall of Saint Antoine l'Abbaye was hidden under coats of paint, and a gaping hole at one end of the room testified as to the room's last function as a movie hall. Some motifs had disappeared altogether, but at the end of two weeks were discovered by the group working in "gypserie." They were traced and reproduced according to traditional

techniques. The original delicate design had been simplified by a 19th century restoration.

The cabinetmaker's workshop removed a few remaining panels of the wainscoting; missing and rotten portions were duplicated and the original wood was treated for insect and moisture damage. Then the panels were reassembled. By making the tools needed for this work, and doing it with traditional techniques, the interns learned a respect and appreciation for their heritage that no books could convey.

The stonemason's group had the awesome task of restoring a stone gabled dormer window which was almost entirely deteriorated. For the students who had never done any stonemasonry or chiseling, they did a commendable job of reproducing the 18th century design. It took great effort, strength, good will and unison to haul the sections of the gable up the curving stairs to the roof; undeniable the spirit which prevailed throughout the two weeks.

St. Antoine-l'Abbaye is an ideal site for teaching restoration techniques and for studying historical building rehabilitation: it is an encyclopedia of traditional techniques in stonemasonry, masonry, stucco, and plastering and cabinet-making, as well as housing the largest collection of unrestored gothic mural painting in Europe.



France's Saint Antoine l'Abbaye in Daupine



**Marion Dean Ross**  
**June 6, 1913 - April 1,**  
**1991**

by Sylvia Elliott

Marion Dean Ross, Professor of Architecture Emeritus at the University of Oregon, died last month at his home at the age of seventy-seven, during his sleep and apparently of natural causes. Professor Ross retired as the head of the Art History Department in 1978, but had returned by popular demand to teach his course on Oregon Architecture during the Spring Quarter 1990, a class he had created many years before based on his intensive forty year study of Oregon's historic structures.

Professor Ross received his Masters in Architecture in 1937 from Harvard University, and in 1940 helped found the Society of Architectural Historians. Before joining the faculty at the University of Oregon, he taught at Tulane University and Pennsylvania State College. During his teaching career he traveled extensively, photographing buildings around the world as well as across the nation.

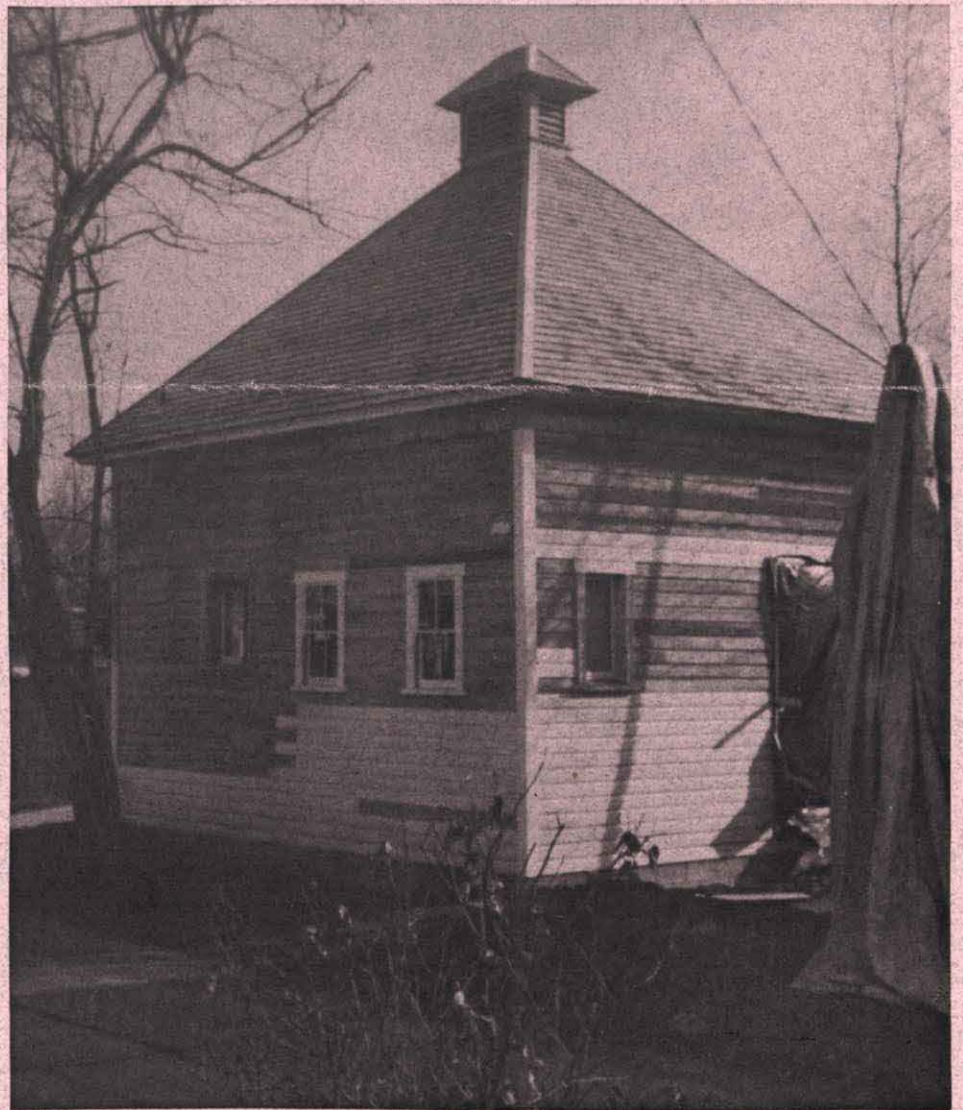
Among the many honors he received during his lifetime was his designation as a Fulbright lecturer in 1961 and his award of Distinguished Preservationist from the Historic Preservation from 1970 to 1976. He served as architectural consultant and was instrumental in efforts to preserve many historic buildings in Jacksonville, Oregon, Eureka, California, and Seattle, Washington. In addition to serving as Acting Dean of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon from 1962 to 1963, Ross wrote numerous articles for Architecture and Art History publications.

Although Marion Ross lived alone and is survived by no known family, he will be remembered by many people. In a eulogy read at the beginning of his Twentieth Century American Architecture class on April 3, Professor Leland Roth acknowledged Ross as "Mr Oregon Architecture", and described Ross' strict discipline as a vehicle to "make

them better architects (and) instill in them the will to defend and preserve the architectural legacy handed over to them." Professor Emeritus Marian C. Donnelly wrote that "although Ross' outward appearance was often curmudgeonly, he had no patience whatever for incompetence or pretension, (these mannerisms) concealed a heart of gold. He helped generations of architectural students to grow through knowledge and understanding of the world's architectural heritage." Dean of the U

of O's School of Architecture and Allied Arts, William Gilland, called Ross a "charismatic figure.... a very highly respected and venerated teacher of the old school... and the kind of professor students don't forget".

The new reading room in the AAA library was named in Ross' honor six months ago, and is a fitting tribute to a man who made the study and preservation of Oregon's historic architecture the focus of his life.



Can anyone identify this building? If you kept your Fall 1990 issue of the ASHP News, this building appeared on the front page in a neglected condition.



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Coffee break, circa 1990; Springfield Mill and Grain Building, circa 1899.