An Appreciation of the SSAC/SÉAC 2005 Annual Conference
By Pierre du Prey, President SSAC/SÉAC

People speak of Toronto the Good; Kingston the Limestone City; Montréal Ville des Cent Clochers, so why not add to the list Lethbridge l’Inaperçu, Lethbridge the Unexpected? Unexpected indeed were the delights that awaited the 40 plus members of the SSAC/SÉAC fortunate enough to discover what Lethbridge had to offer architecturally, and in terms of its open hearted hospitality. We had a great several days there!

Highlights included: our opening reception in Calgary’s restored McDougal Centre; our magical trip to Lethbridge across the seemingly endless and unusually verdant prairies; our bus and walking tours in the city; the much-awaited Martin Eli Weil Prize Lecture vivaciously delivered by this year’s winner, Lara Pascali; the insights from Van Christou into the University of Lethbridge’s design; the inimitable tour from the President’s office to the “underbelly of the beast,” guided by Erickson expert Trevor Boddy; the various receptions hosted by local organizations in our honor; the Old Man River in full flood with mammoth sturgeon attempting to mount the
stream; the view down the coulee into the valley.
Of course the sessions with their individual papers form the intellectual backbone of any SSAC/SÉAC Annual Conference and this year was no exception. I hope that those of you not able to attend this past June will read some of those oral presentations in article form in a future issue of our Journal. I want to thank all the session chairs, individual speakers, and panelists for generously sharing their knowledge and their precious time.

As always, the Annual Banquet is very special. Who attending the St. John’s meeting will forget the Crow’s Nest Club, or moonrise over the battlements of Old Fort Henry in Kingston, to mention only the two most recent occasions? But it will be a hard act to top this year’s event for sheer joy, mixed with the pathos of seeing one of the last surviving “stands” of grain elevators, battered but still proud. The pot of gold at the end of our rainbow (in fact it was a double rainbow) was the McIntyre Cattle Ranch near Magrath – a spread of truly feudal dimensions. The bus mired in the mud, the long walk over the prairie grasses to a spectacular buffalo jump, the setting sun, the rising moon, the flowing wine, the story telling under the tent, who can forget that special evening? Our eternal thanks to our gracious hosts for their cordiality: Cathy Thrall, Ralph Thrall Jr., and Ralph Thrall III. As Trevor put it, “we were enthralled.”

Overall, what struck me most about the Annual Conference was the obvious enjoyment the Organizing Committee took in sharing with us their excitement about Southern Alberta, and the pleasure it gave them to see us respond so enthusiastically. I would like to conclude by thanking once again the committee’s members:

1) Victoria Baster, University of Lethbridge, trouble shooter extraordinaire
2) Heather Bretz, CPV Group Architects & Engineers, Calgary, coordinator and graphic designer extraordinaire
3) Dorothy Field, Head of Heritage Survey Program, Alberta Community Development, Chair of the Committee and Organizer extraordinaire
4) Fred Valentine, Principal of CPV Group Architects & Engineers, Calgary, Alberta Provincial Representative on the Board of the SSAC/SÉAC extraordinaire
5) Janet Wright, Architectural Historian, Session Chair and herder of tardy cowboys and cowgirls extraordinaire.
2005 Martin Eli Weil Prize

Lara Pascali was this year’s recipient of the Martin Eli Weil Prize for her essay on “Two stoves, two refrigerators, Due Cucine: The Italian Immigrant Home with Two Kitchens,” which will be published in the next SSAC journal.

2006 Conference, Charlottetown, PEI / Congrès, Charlottetown, I.P-É.

Building with a Mission / L’Intention de l’Architecture

Without limiting the possible interpretations of this theme our discussions involved, but were not limited to, the following: We believe that this theme provides ample scope for papers to explore a variety of areas and are excited about the possibility of a number of inter-related sessions. The theme will explore both the purpose of architecture and the architecture of purpose. It will focus on the role of building, architecture, design and landscape as a transformative force harnessed by individuals and communities for personal and collective direction. Many examples exist of this ranging from the role of a single church, community hall or library to the ideals behind the planned community which shape the lives of those within it. From the cathedral of culture to the company town the built environment has provided not just a backdrop but an active element which is intended to have an impact on those it touches. The relationship between “architectural movements” and the aspirations of those behind them were often transmuted when interpreted locally. How the role of architecture (including landscape architecture) has been interpreted by architects, builders, communities and individuals provides but one line of inquiry and we believe that the creative approaches of the SSAC/SÉAC members and contributors will make this an interesting and informative conference.
The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada

An Indispensable Reference for Heritage Conservation

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

By Christiane Lefebvre and Ève Wertheimer

In 1999, the federal department of Canadian Heritage commissioned a comprehensive study to ascertain the condition of Canada’s heritage buildings. Results of the study were alarming. During the past 30 years, more than 20 percent of heritage buildings constructed before 1920 had been demolished. In Canadian cities, these losses reached 30 percent.

The Government of Canada responded to this threat to the country’s historic places with its most ambitious and far-reaching heritage-conservation project to date: the Historic Places Initiative. The initiative unites federal, provincial and territorial government representatives—as well as architects, engineers, building owners and other private-sector professionals—to develop effective conservation tools and meet shared heritage-preservation goals. (www.pch.gc.ca/progs/ieh-hpi/index_e.cfm)

Practical advice for conservation experts

One of the Historic Places Initiative’s six components, the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada was created to provide the Canadian public with a comprehensive tool to guide conservation practice. This detailed publication is the result of a major collaborative effort among federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, heritage-conservation professionals, and scores of individual Canadians, and the first document of its kind in Canada. Developed for a broad range of users—including architects, building owners, property managers and landscape experts—the Standards and Guidelines serve as a reliable benchmark for heritage-conservation practice in Canada and is an indispensable reference work for professionals in the field of heritage conservation.

A model of clarity and practicality, Standards and Guidelines contains a wealth of helpful information and advice to those involved in heritage conservation. Divided into five sections, the document offers a wealth of helpful information and advice to users. Of particular interest to heritage-conservation professionals are the principles that underpin Standards and Guidelines. Drawn from accepted international heritage-conservation charters, the four principles are:

• Employ research and investigation to understand historical places
• Conduct integrated, long-term planning before conservation work begins
• Find viable and compatible uses for historic places
• Use a “minimal intervention” conservation approach that respects the value of historic places
In addition to presenting fundamental principles, Section One of the Standards and Guidelines outlines the purpose of the document and defines key terms. Most importantly, Section One clearly lays out the four fundamental steps to successful use of the document:

1. Identify the heritage value and character-defining elements of a historical place
2. Select one of three conservation treatments—preservation, rehabilitation or restoration—that best respects project objectives and the site’s heritage value
3. Review the standards of heritage conservation
4. Apply the guidelines that relate to the specific kind of historic place and the type of treatment option

Putting Standards and Guidelines to work across Canada

Many partners of the Historic Places Initiative have been quick to adopt Standards and Guidelines as an official reference document. Parks Canada now relies on it to assess conservation interventions for all federal heritage buildings and for the national historic sites under its stewardship. The agency also employs Standards and Guidelines to evaluate proposals submitted to the Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund—a federally sponsored program that encourages businesses to preserve historic places and ensure their vitality in community life. (www.pc.gc.ca/commercial properties)

Several provinces, such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as a number of municipalities, have also begun to employ Standards and Guidelines to help safeguard the historic properties under their respective jurisdictions. Private organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Heritage Canada Foundation, are also guided by the Standards and Guidelines—which promises to become an indispensable tool for heritage conservation in Canada.

Christiane Lefebvre, an architect who specializes in the conservation of historic places, is manager of the Historic Places Standards unit within the Historic Places Directorate of Parks Canada.

Ève Wertheimer is an architecture and conservation specialist at the Heritage Conservation Directorate of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Download Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada from the Parks Canada website: www.pc.gc.ca. Order free printed copies of the document by emailing historicplaces@pc.gc.ca.
Call for Session Proposals and Chairs of Sessions

Deadline for submissions: Friday, October 28, 2005

The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada invites proposals for session themes for its next Annual Conference, Building with a Mission, to be held in Charlottetown, PEI from June 14 to June 18, 2006. Session themes should reflect current research work being undertaken on architectural history, theory or design. For design proposals, session themes should involve historical or theoretical components. Proposals focusing on regional themes are welcome; sessions that provide opportunity for synthesizing bodies of research are particularly welcome. The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada also invites session proposals that focus on research that may not have Canadian focus but is undertaken within Canada. An Open Session will also take place to accommodate papers outside the conference themes.

Proposals to be sent to each of the following:

Claudine Déom : cdeom@supernet.ca
Daniel M. Millette : lucubratio@yahoo.com

Proposals chosen will be announced with the Call for Papers in December 2005

Appel de propositions pour séances et présidents de séances

Date limite pour soumettre une proposition : Vendredi, le 28 octobre 2005

La Société pour l’étude de l’architecture au Canada lance un appel pour des propositions de thèmes pour les séances constituant son prochain congrès annuel dont le thème principal sera L’intention de l’architecture et qui aura lieu à Charlottetown (P.E.-É.) du 14 au 18 juin 2006. Les thèmes des séances doivent faire part des recherches actuelles dans les domaines de l’histoire de l’architecture, de la théorie de l’architecture ou du design. Les propositions traitant de sujets particuliers sont les bienvenues, quoique celles qui chercheront à rassembler les recherches en cours seront favorisées. La Société pour l’étude de l’architecture au Canada s’intéresse également aux propositions de thèmes de séances qui, bien qu’elles ne portent pas sur un sujet canadien, témoignent de recherches entreprises au Canada. Une séance libre est prévue pour les communications dont les sujets ne portent pas sur les thèmes des séances retenues.

Prière de faire parvenir vos propositions au deux adresses courriel suivantes :

Claudine Déom : cdeom@supernet.ca
Daniel M. Millette : lucubratio@yahoo.com

Les propositions retenues seront annoncées en décembre 2005 dans le cadre d’un appel de communications.