

ICOMOS General Assembly

In October 1999, the MEXICO ICOMOS Committee hosted the 12th ICOMOS General Assembly. A number of National Park Service staff attended, including Paul Cloyd, historical architect/project manager and Bonita Mueller, historical architect, both of the Denver Service Center. Cloyd received additional support through a grant from the Albright/Wirth Employee Development Fund. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is an international non-governmental organization of professionals, dedicated to the conservation of the world's historic monuments and sites.

The 12th General Assembly gathered together approximately 600 representatives from over 100 ICOMOS member countries. The Assembly convened in Mexico City and then divided into four sections—Heritage and Conservation, Heritage and Territory, Heritage and Development, and Heritage and Society.

Mueller attended the section which focused on Heritage and Territory in Morelia. It included 26 presentations. They defined territory in the context of resource and cultural management and of the environment. The environment broadly included social, economic, political, demographic and geophysical aspects. Presentations included Manuel Reyes' "Research on Stone in Mexico City" which focused on the diagnosis of deterioration mechanisms. Christopher Machat presented "The Geomorphological Conditions of the Territory and the Vernacular Heritage." His premise was that comparable geomorphological conditions produce similar results, particularly in the examples of wood vernacular architecture that he showed. Marilyn Truscott spoke on "Cultural and Natural Heritage management in Australia National Parks." She focused on environment as part of the culture and pointed out that Australia was a cultural landscape long before European settlement.

Several technical trips were offered from the Morelia section. The town of Pazcauro provided the backdrop to discuss wood preservation issues, especially regarding the unique wood vaulting system at Pazcauro Cathedral. A variety of speakers addressed stone issues during a visit to three important structures in Morelia. First, the visit to the Aqueduct of Morelia focused on the history

of construction, the evolution, the testing methods, and the preservation of the world's second largest aqueduct. Second, the Lady of Guadalupe Sanctuary and Causeway of Guadalupe combined the finest available stone in a Late Baroque style (early 20th century) with traditional ornament and detail. The causeway was an urban axis that was also the physical embodiment of pilgrims' religious walk through life. This formerly common element was one of the best-preserved but now rare causeways in the country. It was also an example of the syncretic physical development relative to Pre-Columbian cities. Finally, the Morelia Cathedral set the stage for an excellent discussion of the deterioration of porous stone, consolidation with lime wash, and historic use of chromatic exterior finishes. The trip concluded with a discussion of the misguided removal of exterior plasters on Morelia's stone buildings in 1966 and the UNESCO-sponsored plan to replace them, often in opposition to misinformed local social opinion.

Cloyd participated in the section on Heritage and Society in Guanajuato. He presented his paper on the Cape Hatteras Light Station relocation project on which he serves as project manager. His presentation provided background information on the natural threats to the light station and the alternative solutions considered. He found the international audience accepted the National Park Service's position that the relocation alternative provided the best solution for the conservation of both cultural and natural resources. Colleagues from Cameroon and Trinidad noted they were facing similar threats to large structural resources in their countries and expressed interest in consulting with the National Park Service.

Stephen Townsend of Cape Town, South Africa, discussed the process of declaring urban preservation areas in Cape Town. He explained that the physical development of the city reflects the racial divide of the past. However, he concluded with a moving statement that great strides in uniting the country had been accomplished and that this unification will continue and will be reflected in protection of the heritage of all the citizens of South Africa.

Patricia Green of Jamaica talked of her project on the interpretation of the Caribbean culture as we find it today and the impact the slave trade had upon that cultural development. The project seeks to tell the story of the Caribbean

people as reflected in the built environment of a varied group of Caribbean territories, including those of Spanish, English, and French colonial history. Indeed this project may be of interest to NPS sites with related stories.

The Assembly held its closing ceremonies in Guadalajara. In addition to the closing routine of electing officers, resolutions for the organization were proposed and voted upon. A Peruvian colleague made a passionate plea to the assembly for a resolution in opposition to proposed development at the Machu Picchu archeological site. Some months later the Peruvian government rescinded its support of the development.

Post conference technical tours included the World Heritage sites of the city center of Oaxaca and the 600 B.C.-A.D. 850 archeological remains of Monte Alban near Oaxaca. The site

director led the ICOMOS group through Monte Alban. She pointed out the damage incurred during the recent earthquakes. Archeologists evaluated the damages during a three-day site closure following the earthquake and subsequent aftershocks. We were shown the intense repair efforts underway. The visit provided a unique opportunity to view the work close at hand and to discuss repair philosophy with the site manager. Overall, the site survived remarkably well; however, a few heavily damaged areas had to be closed to the public until repairs could be made. The public and political pressures on the managers to reopen the entire site as soon as possible also provided an interesting discussion topic.

The 13th General Assembly of ICOMOS will convene in Harare, Zimbabwe, in October 2002.

Book Reviews

Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office, by Antoinette J. Lee, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Reviewed by Richard Longstreth, Professor of American Civilization and Director, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

The Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department was one of the most longstanding, prolific, and controversial offices in the annals of American architectural practice. Established in the mid-19th century, this agency was charged with the design and supervision of construction of federal buildings, aside from those of the military, throughout the nation over a period of more than seven decades. Most students of the history of American architecture are aware of that office and of at least a few of its products; yet, aside from a few specialists, that knowledge is paper thin. Little is generally known about the extent or richness of the Supervising Architects' legacy or about the individuals who headed that office.

One of the National Park Service's most distinguished historians, Antoinette J. Lee, has done much to rectify the situation. *Architects to the Nation* is a work of impeccable scholarship that brings an enormous amount of new information to light. Drawing from federal archives, agency

and congressional reports, and architectural journals of the period, she develops a detailed and definitive history. The scope extends beyond the office itself to the beginnings of federal building projects in the late 1780s. An Epilogue delineates the changes introduced from the time of the close of the office in 1939 to the founding of the General Services Administration a decade later. For the first time, one can get a clear view of the federal government's longstanding and significant contributions to shaping the urban landscape for over a century and a half.

The Supervising Architect's office was a tumultuous place that came under attack from many quarters during much of its existence. Politicians often treated it as a whipping boy. The American Institute of Architects and often the architectural press were unrelenting through the 19th century with accusations that the office was incompetent as well as excluding the profession from important public works. Things were not always harmonious within the office either; intrigue seems to have been commonplace.

In presenting this chronicle, Lee employs unwavering restraint and detachment. She does not gloss over myriad controversies of the office, but neither does she dwell upon them. Indeed, one gets the impression that the text gives only a glimpse of the politics and infighting that sometimes prevailed. Lee's refusal to get too embroiled in such machinations has its strengths for it keeps