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THE 1974 CONFERENCE-- PITTSBURGH

Charlotte B. Furness

The two day Annual Conference began Friday evening, 26 April, with registration for the 125 attendees at the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation Museum, the restored, grand Old Post Office of 1897. Bright sunshine and 80° weather characterized the entire weekend, making the work of conference organizer Field Curry that much more rewarding.

That first evening witnessed a presentation, in the Museum's rotunda, on the impressive work of the PHLF. Speaking on behalf of the Foundation was its Executive Director, Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. A wine & cheese reception followed. Above the noisy din of an SIA reunion, and without the slightest fanfare, a local chamber ensemble played for two hours. Only in time did it sink in that their concert was a part of Pittsburgh hospitality; the entire evening simply providing a sneak preview of the good things in store over the course of the next three days.

The formal program began Saturday in the William Penn Hotel's art nouveau Pittsburgh Room, designed in the 1930s by the renowned architect John Urban, we learned from Pittsburgh's architectural historian, James Van Trump. For the first time an SIA conference took place in a hotel and the elegant, lively William Penn nicely filled the bill--it was convenient and rather novel. The morning's agenda included five presentations on IA sites and structures (see *Abstracts*) and as well, provided an opportunity to look over a number of IA-related exhibits and publications.

At lunch, outgoing President Edward Rutsch and Treasurer Vance Packard conducted what has to be regarded as the least painful, most humorous business meeting on record (see *Minutes*). Kenneth Hudson, our English guest speaker, was overheard to comment, "It alone was worth a trans-Atlantic voyage!" During the course of the afternoon a much needed and often proposed session of short notes and project reports finally took place, chaired by eminent labor folklorist Archie Green. These less-formal offerings apparently were well received and will become a part of

future conferences.

Louise M. Merritt, historian and preservationist, chaired the last two papers of the day. The program ended on Merritt's positive, strongly personal observations about the Society and its future directions. Filled with visions and information about over a dozen IA sites and projects, the conferees reeled off to their rooms to make ready for the evening's program, aboard the *Gateway Party Liner*.

A lazy four-hour cruise along the rivers of Pittsburgh provided an opportunity to chat, snap dozens of frames of film, and generally gawk; for the shores were alive with IA activity--all rather surreal. Little incline cars crawled up and down the heights, giant caldrons spewed out molten metal, blast furnaces were charged, and coke ovens smoked at the numerous steel mills; river barges loaded with coal shuffled by; and on shore freight trains snaked along. We passed almost endlessly under the spans of Pittsburgh's bridges, which truly fit Curry's description: they were "a living textbook of bridge engineering, from lenticular trusses to suspension bridges to tied arches." Getting everyone to come indoors for dinner was quite a chore, after which only Kenneth Hudson's compelling films on the popularization of Industrial Archeology in Great Britain could possibly have kept them there. Back at dockside for most the evening ended; but for the hard-core, there still were those inclines to ride that night.

