



# SESAH NEWSLETTER

Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians



## SESAH | 2014 | FAYETTEVILLE

**Annual Conference of the Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians**  
October 29 – November 1, 2014

When SESAH last met in Fayetteville, it was 1998, and we could not have predicted how different a place it would be as we prepare for this year's annual conference. The University of Arkansas has grown to serve a population of nearly 26,000 students, and the campus has blossomed in concert—with restoration of venerated landmarks and addition of new structures by Machado-Silvetti, Robert A.M. Stern, and our own Steven L. Anderson Design Center by Marlon Blackwell Architect. The regional identity of northwest Arkansas, once known as a corporate headquarters for big box retail, (Walmart!), equally big machines (J.B. Hunt Trucking), and animal protein (Tyson Foods), has been transformed with the opening, nearly three years ago, of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, designed by Moshe Safdie. Although Fayetteville always will be known to architectural historians as the home of Fay Jones, and the larger area the site of his most renown works, including Thorncrown Chapel, recent research and preservation efforts embrace a larger Ozark Modern tradition, that includes Jones's contemporary Warren Segraves, and extends to a cutting-edge generation of twenty-first-century architects who embrace that legacy in their own work.

The 2014 SESAH Conference schedule balances ample opportunities for showcasing our member's scholarship in paper sessions and sharing new highlights of our evolving cityscape, with focus on campus historic preservation endeavors. Dr. Gwendolyn Wright will present the annual keynote lecture, Thursday evening. An open house to the Arkansas Architectural Archive, which houses the papers of Fay Jones, and an optional tour to the Crystal Bridge Museum will be offered as well. Close to campus are our arts and entertainment district, Victorian and mid-century historic districts, and an historic town square, all of which contribute to a sense of place that has earned Fayetteville the rank of #4 on liveability.com's 2014 list of "the best college towns." Although no promises can be made, chances are good that Ozark fall colors will

provide a spectacular backdrop for viewing it all. We hope that you will join us for what promises to be a thought-provoking conference in an atmosphere steeped in architectural, and natural treasures.

A summary conference schedule and details concerning registration, lodging and travel to Fayetteville follow below.



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## Summary Schedule, October 29 - November 1

### **Wednesday 29 October**

- 3:00p-6:00p Registration
- 6:30p-8:30p SESAH Board meeting

### **Thursday 30 October**

- 8:00a-8:30a Registration
- 8:30a-10:00a Opening/Welcome Session,  
"Fayetteville, 1914 – 2014: How the Ozarks became Modern,"
- 10:15a-11:45a Paper session 1A: On the Precipice Between Modernity and Tradition  
Paper session 1B, Reconciling the Universal and the Ineffable: Modern Sacred Space  
Paper session 1C: Tennessee Remembers the Great War
- 11:45a-12:45p Box Lunch (included with registration fee)
- 12:45p-2:45p "Historic Preservation and the Contemporary Campus,"  
A walking tour highlighting University of Arkansas campus preservation initiatives.
- 3:00p-4:30p Paper session 2A, House, Place, and Community in the South  
Paper session 2B, Digital Methods for Architectural History and Preservation  
Paper session 2C, Everything you wanted to know about Arkansas architecture, but were afraid to ask
- 4:30p-5:15p Coffee Reception, Fred and Mary Smith Exhibition Gallery
- 5:30p Keynote Lecture, Dr. Gwendolyn Wright
- evening Dinner on your own



Vol Walker Hall

### **Friday 31 October**

- 8:15a-10:15a Paper session 3A, Modern Problems  
Paper session 3B, Greek Revival(s) Considered and Reconsidered  
Paper session 3C, The Prospects of Preservation
- 10:30a-12:00a Paper session 4A, Defining the Body Politic: The Rhetoric of National Belonging in Modern Architecture  
Paper session 4B, Landscapes of Memory  
Paper session 4C, Dangerous Liaisons: Architectural History and Technology
- 12:15p-2:15p Annual Business Meeting (lunch provided for registered participants),
- 2:30p-4:30p Paper session 5A, Art and Architecture, Theory and Ideology  
Paper session 5B, The Modern South  
Paper session 5C, Making Public Places
- evening Dinner on your own. Happy Hallowe'en!

### **Saturday 01 November**

- 9:00a-10:00a Open House, Arkansas Architecture Archive, Mullins Library, University of Arkansas
- 10:30a-5:30p Guided Study Tour, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR.  
Shown in transit: "Clean Lines, Open Spaces: Mid-Century Modernism in Arkansas"

## Conference Site and Venues

All paper sessions, including and the keynote lecture will be hosted in the Fay Jones School of Architecture's historic Vol Walker Hall and its contemporary addition, the Steven L. Anderson Design Center. For the annual business meeting and luncheon, we will travel across campus to the Inn at Carnall Hall, once a women's dormitory, now a hotel/conference facility.

## Registration

The full conference registration fee is \$150, which includes continental breakfasts on Thursday and Friday; box lunch and afternoon reception on Thursday; and the business lunch on Friday. As always, the registration fee should be made payable by check to SESAH. At this time, we do not have capabilities for accepting electronic payment...but we are working on it. For details about partial registration, please see the registration form available on <http://sesah.org/>

The Saturday Study Tour to the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art by Moshe Safdie requires an additional fee of \$40, including lunch. We will have architectural tours, a visit with at least one of the curators (hopefully, someone who is working on the installation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Bachman Wilson House, which has come to the museum), and time for participants to walk the trail (including a James Turrell light space) to the Bentonville square to visit the 21C Hotel, by Deborah Berke, and its gallery, or to checkout the nearby Walmart Museum (yes, there is one!). A few surprise architectural stops along the way are also on the drawing boards.

## Travel to Fayetteville

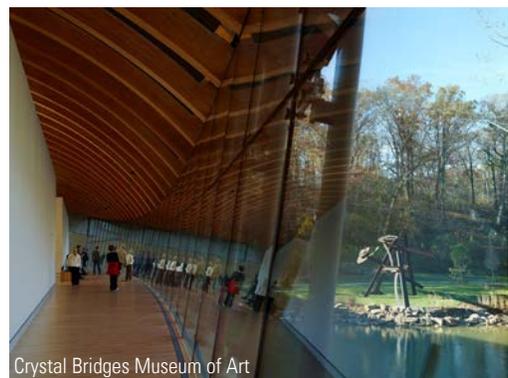
The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA) is the closest airport to Fayetteville, with service by American and United (through Dallas and Houston) and Delta (through Atlanta and Memphis). The airport is about 30 miles out of town, and we recommend that you come to Fayetteville with Jim's Express Shuttle Service, typically a \$45 fare. Participants who plan to rent a car might find more economical fares through Fort Smith, Arkansas (about one hour away) or Tulsa, Oklahoma (an hour and forty-five minute drive).

## Lodging

Two hotels are recommended:

Carnall Hall, an inn on campus, which is available for \$119 plus 9% tax. We were able to block only a limited number of rooms at the inn. If you wish to stay there, you are encouraged to make your reservation a.s.a.p. For the SESAH block, contact:

Inn at Carnall Hall  
465 N. Arkansas Ave.  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
(479) 582-0400 1 or 800-295-9118



Staybridge Suites, about one mile from campus, offers a \$97.00 plus the 9% tax rate. This location will be served by a shuttle; it is on the campus bus route as well. For the SESAH room block contact:

Staybridge Suites  
1577 W 15th St,  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
(479) 695-2400



## A California House in Georgia

Alfred Willis

One of the South's most remarkable Modern houses may be headed for demolition if plans are approved to rezone its site to permit erection of a high-occupancy student housing complex serving nearby Valdosta State University.

Completed in 1953, the George L. and Beverly A. Nichols house in Valdosta, Georgia, is the state's most characteristic example of a bi-nuclear house. Its flat-roofed design conforms very closely to the bi-nuclear prototypes produced by William Wurster in the early 1940s and refined a bit later by Marcel Breuer. Indeed it appears to have been directly inspired by Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons's Case Study House 3 (published 1949). It seems also to evince a good deal of influence from work by Cliff May. The house is built of redwood and was originally surrounded by a "California garden" integral with the house itself but planted by Beverly Nichols. The house therefore provides an unusually complete set of evidence showing how California design affected Georgia Modernism in the early 1950s.

Beverly and George Nichols were Californians who moved to Valdosta in the 1940s. George Nichols was the nephew of J. C. Nichols, one of America's earliest and largest operators in the production and brokerage of plywood. Beverly Nichols was not only an avid horticulturalist but also an enthusiast of the casual yet stylish, indoor-outdoor lifestyle advocated by Thomas Church and Garrett Eckbo alongside May and Wurster.

A local Valdosta firm, Lloyd Greer, W. Conner Thomson, Architects, designed the house. Greer (1895-1952) was a pioneer of architectural professionalism in South Georgia. Thomson (1919-1990), who was Greer's associate from 1947 to 1950 before becoming his partner from 1950 to 1952, graduated from Georgia Tech in 1946. He was among Tech's first architecture alumni to embrace Modernism wholeheartedly. As an Ultramodern work their Nichols house ranks among very few domestic structures in its region to depart in a radical direction from conservative Modernism.

The Nichols house is situated on a wooded lot in an intact, medium-density residential section developed from the 1940s through the 1960s and populated mostly by ranch houses. The house survives almost completely intact both inside and out (bathrooms, kitchen, light fixtures, flooring, numerous plywood built-ins, etc.). Especially notable is a storage wall separating the foyer from the family room within the glazed link and containing a specially configured television niche.

A 2003 Georgia Historic Resources Survey of Lowndes County took note of the Nichols house. Alfred Willis is consulting for a local home-owners' group that has rallied to defend it. A proposal for designating it a local historic landmark is pending, and a National Register nomination is being prepared. The house will be proposed as architecturally significant at the statewide level. It also possesses local significance as evidence of Valdosta business history.

Willis would like to hear from anyone with information on comparable bi-nuclear houses anywhere in the Southeast. Please email him at [alfredwillis@yahoo.com](mailto:alfredwillis@yahoo.com)

