Gavin Townsend and his crew did a super job of hosting our annual meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, October 13 to the 16th, 2010. Both the setting and the weather were perfect. The amazing Chattanooga Choo-Choo Hotel supplied meeting rooms, reception areas, dining facilities, and, for the most adventurous, a chance to stay in a real train car. We were close to the downtown so walking was easy and Gavin made sure architectural tours were part of our daily experience. The beautiful weather added to our enjoyment of what was a very well planned meeting.

Thursday morning Gavin started us off with a great introduction to the early history of the area. Andy Smith followed with a consideration of post-WWII buildings. Both Gavin, a professor at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, and Andy, an architect/preservationist whose firm co-hosted the meeting, have a long involvement in the city and gave us a provocative and informative introduction that set the tone for the next three days.

Continued on page 13
From the President

Dear Friends in SESAH,

I have a number of important messages for the membership, but all others pale beside the need for new *ARRIS* editors. An appeal to those qualified and interested appears on the front page of this newsletter, so I will not repeat what is said there. If you can fill this most important position, please respond. If you know of others who might be able to fill it, please give them a gentle nudge. Without new editors to take the position in October, WE WILL NOT HAVE A JOURNAL ISSUE FOR 2012. It is as simple as that.

Moving on, there are only good things to say about the state of our society. You can expect your 2010 issue of *ARRIS* to arrive in your mailbox very soon. It was a real challenge for Leslie Sharp, Mark Reinberger, and Paul Sprague to pull together this issue on very short notice. But they have done it, and we are in their debt. And we are beholding to Leslie and Mark for agreeing to prepare the 2011 issue as well. Please send them manuscripts if you have them.

We have a new newsletter editor in Ben Ross, and Robbie Jones has continued to assist him with this issue so we have a smooth transition. We also have a new treasurer in Julia Smyth-Pinney, and she has been busy setting up accounts and procedures and accepting files from Rob Craig. We have already thanked Rob for his many years in the treasurer’s position, and we thank him yet again for a job long well done. It is not insignificant that we have made it through these difficult economic times in very good financial condition.

We have also had a wonderful annual meeting in Chattanooga and can anticipate the next one in Charleston, South Carolina. Gavin Townsend was thanked last October for all his good work, and I repeat that thanks here. It was a splendid meeting in every respect, and we had an increase in attendance over Jackson, 2009, even at a time when travel budgets are so tight or nonexistent. Charleston is on many people’s list of favorite places, and Ashley Robbins Wilson is preparing to welcome you all there in October, 2011. You will be reading the call for papers elsewhere in this newsletter, so please get your abstracts in to Ashley in a timely fashion, and make your plans to be there.

Finally, please step forward if you would like to be considered for a position on the SESAH board of directors. The states needing new directors in October are Alabama, Arkansas, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Send names to me at mfazio@caad.msstate.edu or to Anat Geva at ageva@arch.tamu.edu.

Michael Fazio
Mississippi State University

Gavin Townsend provides background on the Bianculli House during the Chattanooga Study Tour

The Mario Bianculli House, Chattanooga
From the Editor

As many of you know, Robbie Jones will be transitioning out after several years as newsletter editor and I will be assuming these duties. Robbie and I have worked together on this issue to ensure a smooth transition. Please make sure to thank Robbie for his great work over the last few years!

You may have noticed the Raleigh return address on the outside of the newsletter. My employer RATIO Architects, Inc., has agreed to absorb the cost of forwarding any newsletter-related mail from our Raleigh office (located within the SESAH region) to our Indianapolis office (where I am located). Any items mailed to that address will be forwarded to Indianapolis immediately. For any urgent correspondence, I would encourage you to contact me by email.

Benjamin L. Ross  
Editor, SESAH Newsletter  
RATIO Architects, Inc.  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
BLRoss@gmail.com

Send correspondence and submissions for publication to the SESAH Newsletter editor. Deadline for submission of material for the Fall 2011 issue is August 12, 2011.

The SESAH Newsletter has been published since 1983. Visit www.sesah.org to download recent issues of the SESAH Newsletter.

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Printed by Allegra Print & Imaging, Nashville, Tennessee.
Welcome New Board Members!

Virginia representative **Karen Kingsley, Ph.D.**, Professor Emerita, Tulane University School of Architecture, now lives in Arlington, Virginia. Currently she is Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor of the Society of Architectural Historians’ *Buildings of the United States* series published by the University of Virginia Press. Karen is the author of *Buildings of Louisiana* and continues to research and write on southern architecture.

Louisiana representative **Gerald T. McNeill** is a cultural geographer and has been an instructor of geography at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana, for twelve years. He received a B.A. in History and a B.A. in Geography from Louisiana State University in New Orleans, and his M.A. in Geography from the University of New Orleans. His interest areas within geography are: Necrogeography, Architectural Geography, Geographic Education, and Louisiana Geography with an emphasis on the cultural landscape.

**Lee Gray** is an Associate Dean in the College of Arts + Architecture at UNC Charlotte. He is the author of *From Ascending Rooms to Express Elevators: A History of the Passenger Elevator in the 19th Century* and writes monthly articles on the history of vertical transportation for *Elevator World*. Current projects include a book on the history of escalators and moving sidewalks and a history of AIA Charlotte. He has appeared on the History Channel in *Modern Marvels – Building a Skyscraper* (2004) and on PBS in *NOVA: Trapped in an Elevator* (2010).

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2011 Yearly Dues

All current SESAH members and new members are invited to pay their calendar year dues for 2011. The membership levels are listed below:

- **Individual** .......................................................... $35
- **Student** (current ID required) ........................... $20
- **Contributing** ..................................................... $50+
- **Institutional** ..................................................... $60
- **Library Subscription to ARRIS** ......................... $40
- **Life** (payable in 3 installments if preferred) ...... $500

Questions about membership dues status should be sent to Julia Smyth-Pinney, Treasurer, SESAH: email jsmyth@uky.edu

Please send a check, made out to SESAH, to:

Julia Smyth-Pinney, SESAH Treasurer
630 Headley Avenue
Lexington, KY 40508-1308

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Bill Gatlin, Michael Fazio, Marietta Monaghan, David Gobel, and Daves Rossell discuss the Shavin House during the Chattanooga Study Tour.

Ethel Goodstein-Murphree, Bob Kelly, Julia Smyth-Pinney, and Betty Dowling at the Hunter Museum in Chattanooga.
The Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (SESAH) will hold its 29th Annual Meeting in Charleston, SC, from October 26-29, 2011. The SESAH Host Committee invites abstracts for individual papers or proposals for session panels, consisting of three papers and a chair. As with all SESAH conferences, papers and sessions may address any aspect of the history of the built environment as well as any geographical region, historical period, or scale. We anticipate sessions will revolve around such themes as Green Architecture in the South, Buildings of TVA, Postmodernism in the New South, Mid-Twentieth Century Modernism in Dixie, Period Revivalism, African and Caribbean Influence in American Architecture, and Southern Women as Architects and Patrons of Architecture. We also expect sessions on subjects related to European, Medieval, and Minority Architecture.

Abstracts should be sent by May 1, 2011, to Ashley Wilson, Clemson/College of Charleston MSHP Program, 292 Meeting Street, Charleston, SC 29401 or email arobbin@clemson.edu.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be clearly labeled with the applicant’s name, professional affiliation, contact information, a brief C.V., and the title of the proposed paper. Proposals for session panels should include the title of the session; the names, affiliations, contact information, and C.V.s of all participants; and abstracts of each paper. Please send all materials as PDF or MS Word attachments. Digital presentations only, please. Submission of an abstract is considered a commitment to attend the meeting.

Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by June 1, 2011. Authors of accepted proposals must submit the complete text of their papers to their session chair by September 30, 2011; SESAH reserves the right to drop presenters who do not fulfill this requirement. All participants must be current members of SESAH by the meeting date and must register for the conference; there are discounts for students and for those that pre-register by October 12, 2011.

SESAH offers a limited number of travel grants to help graduate students attend the meeting to deliver papers. If you are a graduate student, identify yourself as such in your submission; you will be sent a travel grant application if your paper is selected.

The 2011 SESAH Annual Meeting will consist of paper sessions, a plenary session, a walking tour and a study tour. On Thursday morning, longtime mayor of Charleston and urban visionary, Joseph P. Riley, will deliver the welcome remarks on Charleston urbanism at the Charleston Museum. A reception will be held Thursday evening and a business lunch meeting and awards ceremony will take place Friday afternoon. On Friday evening, Witold Rybczynski, Martin and Margy Meyerson Professor of Urbanism, Professor of Real Estate and author of Makeshift Metropolis will speak about cities and urban life. Tours of the city, museum properties, and plantation landscape will also be held on Saturday.
Registration Fees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advance Registration (postmark before October 12)</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late registration (after October 12)</td>
<td>$175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Pass (excluding banquet lunch)</td>
<td>$90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students (with photocopy of valid student ID)</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witold Rybczynski lecture &amp; reception only</td>
<td>$20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Registration fee includes access to all paper sessions, receptions, walking tours and access to historic landmarks, a bound copy of the abstracts, introduction by Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, keynote lecture by Witold Rybczynski, a reception at the Aiken Rhett House, a Business Lunch & Awards Ceremony, and more! A Saturday Study Tour is optional with additional fee.

SESAH Membership:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>$50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All conference attendees and participants must be members of SESAH. Membership dues are for one calendar year. All SESAH members receive the annual journal ARRIS as well as the SESAH Newsletter (2x/year).

Saturday Study Tour: $50

Bus tour and walking tour will be announced in April and will include visits to various architectural landmarks, private homes, and vernacular architecture in and around Charleston.

TOTAL $__________
REGISTRATION FORM

Please write your name and institutional affiliation and/or city as you would like them to appear on your badge and in the participant directory:

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Institutional Affiliation: ________________________________________________

City: __________________________________________________________________

Mailing Address: Street: ________________________________________________

City/State/Zip: _________________________________________________________

Email Address: _________________________________________________________

Dietary Restrictions/Preferences: _________________________________________

SESAH member? _______ How many SESAH conferences have you attended? _____

TOTAL REGISTRATION FEE (from page 1): $_________

*Please make checks payable to SESAH.
*Credit Card payments can be made via phone, call Allisyn Miller at 843-937-9596

Send completed registration form with payment to:

Graduate Program in Historic Preservation
292 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29401

(843) 937-9596
akmiller1@cofc.edu
THE 2011 SESAH CONFERENCE HOTEL

The Francis Marion Hotel
387 King Street
Charleston, SC 29403
843-722-0600
www.francismarionhotel.com

Named for General Francis Marion, the “Swamp Fox” of the American Revolution, the hotel opened in 1924 as the largest and grandest in the Carolinas. Throughout the years, many notable historic and famous clientele enjoyed the hotel’s full service and convenient location. In 1996, an extensive restoration earned the hotel the National Trust Award. More recent refurbishments have added to the comforts of today and enhanced the hotel’s historic ambiance with sleek room décor reminiscent of the 1920’s grandeur.

When making reservations, be sure to mention that you are participating in the SESAH conference and ask for the special discounted rate of $149 (plus tax).

TRAVEL
The Charleston International Airport offers direct flights to and from Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Nashville, Orlando, Baltimore/Washington., and is served by American Airlines, US Airways Delta, United, and Southwest Airlines. The hotel offers a shuttle to the airport for $12-25/person. For those who prefer to drive, Charleston is served by two interstate highways (I-26 and I-95).
## PRELIMINARY 2011 SESAH CONFERENCE OUTLINE (all times EST)

### Wednesday – October 26, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:00-6:00pm</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Francis Marion Hotel (FMH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00-9:00pm</td>
<td>Board meeting, Dinner</td>
<td>Park View Room, FMH</td>
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### Thursday – October 27, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00am-11:00am</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Francis Marion Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00am-10:00am</td>
<td>Opening Speaker: Mayor Riley</td>
<td>The Charleston Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am-11:15am</td>
<td>Introduction to Charleston</td>
<td>The Charleston Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30am-1:30pm</td>
<td>Lunch on your own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30pm-3:00pm</td>
<td>Paper Session 01</td>
<td>Laurens, Rutledge, Pinckney Rooms, FMH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30pm-5:00pm</td>
<td>Paper session 02</td>
<td>Laurens, Rutledge, Pinckney Rooms, FMH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30pm-7:30pm</td>
<td>Cocktail Reception</td>
<td>Aiken Rhett House</td>
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### Friday – October 28, 2011

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00am-9:00am</td>
<td>Registration for Daily Pass</td>
<td>Francis Marion Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30am-10:00am</td>
<td>Paper session 03</td>
<td>Laurens, Rutledge, Pinckney Rooms, FMH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30am-12:00pm</td>
<td>Paper session 04</td>
<td>Laurens, Rutledge, Pinckney Rooms, FMH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-1:45pm</td>
<td>Business Lunch and Awards</td>
<td>Calhoun Ballroom, FMH</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00pm-3:30pm</td>
<td>Paper Session 05</td>
<td>Laurens, Rutledge, Pinckney Rooms, FMH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00pm-6:00pm</td>
<td>Pre-Key Note Reception</td>
<td>Terrace Lobby, Sottile Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00pm-7:30pm</td>
<td>Key Note Lecture: Witold Rybczynski</td>
<td>Sottile Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30pm</td>
<td>Graduate Student Mixer</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner on your own</td>
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### Saturday – October 29, 2011

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00am-2:00pm</td>
<td>Study Tour by bus of Charleston or Walking Tour of Charleston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Awards:
Ann Pearson of Auburn received the Alabama Historical Commission’s Roy Swayze Award for outstanding achievement by a private owner in the restoration and preservation of her family home, Noble Hall (1852-54), a Greek Revival plantation house in Auburn.

New Book on Alabama architecture:

Magazine Articles on Alabama architecture:
Read about Alabama architecture in Preservation (January-February 2011); this article details the surprise discovery of printing plates belonging to Birmingham architect Wallace A. Rayfield. In ecohome (January-February 2011), a “Southern farmhouse” designed by Auburn University architecture professors Christian Dagg and David Hinson is discussed in terms of sustainability and environmentally sensitive design.

News from Florida
Michelle Michael,
Naval Facilities and Engineering Command Southeast

The Riverside-Avondale neighborhood in Jacksonville is one of the largest historic districts in the country. It boasts a diverse range of architectural influences from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with approximately 5000 buildings inside its boundaries. The neighborhood was recently honored by the American Planning Association as one of “America's Ten Great Neighborhoods”. This is APA’s flagship program to recognize places that represent a combination of community involvement, visionary thinking, cultural and historical interest and a sense of place.

Dale Allen Gyure (Lawrence Tech University) is the author of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Florida Southern College (University of Florida Press, 2010), the first in-depth examination of one of Wright’s largest projects. His second book, The Chicago Schoolhouse, 1856-2006: High School Architecture and Educational Reform (Center for...
American Places), will be published in the spring of 2011.

**News from Georgia**  
Leslie Sharp and Teresa Nagel, Georgia Tech

George B. Johnston has been appointed chair of the Georgia Tech School of Architecture. A 26-year member of the architecture faculty, Dr. Johnston is the first to hold this newly created position after the College of Architecture reorganized into five schools. His recent book, *Drafting Culture: A Social History of Architectural Graphic Standards* (MIT Press 2008), received the SESAH Outstanding Book Award in 2009.

Historic photograph of the recently renovated Hinman Research Building (Georgia Tech Archives)

Georgia Tech’s College of Architecture completed a $9.5 million restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic Hinman Research Building in December 2010. Designed in 1939 by P.M. Heffernan, architect and later director of the Tech School of Architecture (1956-1976), the 35,000-square-foot building has been artfully preserved and revitalized in collaboration between Lord, Aeck & Sargent’s Historic Preservation Studio and Office dA as the architects. The Hinman Research Building originally housed the Georgia Tech Engineering Experiment Station, the predecessor to the Georgia Tech Research Institute. The newly rehabilitated space includes graduate level architecture studios, computer labs, interdisciplinary research labs, high-fidelity simulation and planning labs, administrative offices, galleries and space for large-scale events.

**News from Mississippi**  
Bill Gatlin, Mississippi Department of Archives & History, Jackson

Michael Fazio and Jennifer Baughn are diligently working on the *Buildings of Mississippi*. We continue to work on Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. The Ohr-O’Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi celebrated its grand opening November 8, 2010. Construction began in 2003, but the site was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Work began anew in 2008. The works of George Ohr, “The Mad Potter of Biloxi,” are housed in metal-skinned pods designed by Frank Gehry. The campus also features a reconstruction of the Pleasant Reed House. The original Reed house was a camelback shotgun house built by Pleasant Reed, an African-American carpenter. The house was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The Gehry pods, the Reed House and other existing and planned campus buildings can be viewed at the museum website:

http://www.georgeohr.org/index.html

**Future SESAH Meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Athens, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Charlotte, North Carolina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2010 SESAH Award Winners

Best of the South: Preserving Southern Architecture Award

SESAH’s annual “Best of the South: Preserving Southern Architecture Award” honors a project that preserves or restores an historic building, or complex of buildings, in an outstanding manner and that demonstrates excellence in research, technique, and documentation. This year the award highlights the restoration of the **E. 6th Street USO Club in Hattiesburg, Mississippi**, that was led by Albert & Associates Architects.

The E. 6th Street USO was built in 1942 as a temporary structure. Its construction was funded through a federal program that sponsored 300 or so of these clubs for military personnel. Few of the USO club buildings are extant, making this structure an important architectural remnant of the recent past.

The E. 6th Street USO Club provided a place for African American soldiers to gather during the war years. After the war, it continued in this vital function, remaining the center of social activity for the surrounding African American community. It also became the library for those barred from the city’s public facilities during the segregation era. Today, the USO Club is a symbol of the neighborhood’s ongoing renewal and a reminder of a community’s resilience in the face of overwhelming obstacles. It is owned by the Hattiesburg Convention Commission and is open as an African American Military History Museum.

For more information about the USO Club go to [www.hattiesburguso.com](http://www.hattiesburguso.com)

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2010 SESAH Best Book Award

Prof. Louis P. Nelson (University of Virginia)

2010 SESAH Best Journal Article Award

Prof. Kim Sexton (University of Arkansas)

2010 Student Travel Grant Winners

Congratulations!

**Kathryn Lasdow**
University of Virginia
“*Conferred Distinction*: The Redevelopment of Boston’s Waterfront in the Early Nineteenth Century

**Courtney Theis**
Ball State University
‘Ye Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make You Free’: Architectural Inscriptions at the University of Virginia
We had our usual, wonderful papers in concurrent sessions and heard about subjects as diverse as the Dixie Highway and the Vietnam Memorial, the “primitive hut” and the idea of “levitation” in modern building. The papers were superb as were the arrangements Gavin had made to accommodate us. There was one brief glitch when the microphone from one room was broadcasting in the room next door, but Gavin, ever on top of things, quickly solved that problem.

During the lunch break, led by Sally Butler and Andy Smith, we walked to the Solomon Building, a 1930s Courthouse where special arrangements allowed us access to the main courtroom. There we saw a WPA mural and some fantastic Deco ornament. Thursday afternoon we had a lovely reception at the Hunter Museum, a building that combines an historic house with not only a 1970s brutalist addition, but also a more recent Randall Stout undulating concoction. It was there we had the special pleasure of hearing the keynote speaker, Fikret Yegül, author of the *Bathing in the Roman World*, talk about “The Classical Column; A fundamental Notion in Architecture.”

Friday, after the morning paper sessions, we celebrated the annual SESAH awards presentations at the lunch and business meeting. The details are noted elsewhere in the newsletter, but suffice it to say the lunch was very good, the company even better, and the awards a great chance to honor the achievements of our colleagues. The afternoon paper session was followed by a tour of the TVA building, led by Doug Johnson, principal architect for the TVA. The huge complex was praised for pioneering efforts at energy efficiency. Andy Smith then led us on a walking tour of other notable buildings, many of which he had helped preserve. The work of local architect Rueben Harrison Hunt (1862-1937) was particularly noted. He designed buildings all across the South between 1895 and 1935, but focused on his hometown where a wonderful group of structures survives. It was a great two days, followed by a fantastic Saturday tour. We are all grateful to Gavin and his colleagues for their superb organization and careful planning. It was a great meeting.
Our Saturday study tour of Chattanooga took us from the fabulous Choo Choo through downtown (handsome public buildings by Reuben Harrison Hunt, outdoor cafes, and the popular riverfront development starring the Tennessee Aquarium), north across the Tennessee River through artsy NorthShore and elegant Riverview, and then southwest to Lookout Mountain and east to Missionary Ridge.

Gavin Townsend, our well-organized and good-humored conference host and tour guide, placed our tour’s emphasis on domestic architecture. We saw three remarkable examples of mid-twentieth century modernism (the butterfly-roofed Mario Bianculli house, 1945; Richard Neutra’s brick-veneered Livingston house, 1956; and Frank Lloyd Wright’s hillside Usonian house, 1950-52, for Seymour and Gerte Shavin). At the Neutra house, Ann Raines showed us two color drawings of the house and told us about Neutra’s site visits and her mother’s request for an “office” instead of a sewing room. To satisfy Mrs. Livingston, Neutra designed built-in filing cabinets and a place for her typewriter in the master bedroom. At the Shavin house (built using Tennessee Crab Orchard stone and red cypress), Gerte Shavin greeted us in the living room and spoke about the rigors of maintaining a FLW house.

In addition to the modernist houses, we toured Ashland Farm, the handsome Neoclassical Revival home of Z. Cartter Patten (1905; remodeled 1938), and also its grounds. Our tour’s oldest building was the Robert Cravens house (1855; rebuilt 1866) dramatically located on the site of the Civil War’s Battle Above the Clouds. At the Cravens house we admired the fine brick pavers manufactured in Robbins, Tennessee, and enjoyed the panoramic view of Chattanooga, basking below in the sunshine. The study tour deepened our knowledge and appreciation of this exciting city and its superbly scenic setting.
Richard Neutra’s Elusive Livingston House
By Robbie D. Jones,
New South Associates, Nashville

For years, architectural historians had tried in vain to get a look at the Richard Neutra’s Livingston House, located on an isolated bluff overlooking Chattanooga. The owners had been reclusive and politely declined requests for interviews or tours. Located in the tony suburb of Signal Mountain at the end of a private drive with no access, photographs of the home were nearly impossible. The boxy but sleek house almost seemed like a myth. The only other Neutra houses in the Southeast are located in Shreveport, Louisiana, and Richmond, Virginia.

Nevertheless, Gavin Townsend knew that the SESAH group would want to at least try and get a peek at the elusive Livingston House, so he arranged for a swing by during the Saturday Study Tour. Long story short, the owner – Ann Raines - was home and not only allowed an impromptu tour of the exterior, but also agreed to an interview. We were unabashedly giddy!

Here’s what we learned. Ann’s parents, Dr. Howard and Jean Livingston, wanted a modern home and after considered several nationally recognized architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright who had recently designed the Shavin House in Chattanooga, decided to hire Richard Neutra of Los Angeles. Neutra traveled to Chattanooga on several occasions during the design and construction of the home, which was completed in 1956. Ann recalled that he interviewed each family member, including herself – then a young girl, to find out how he could ensure the design would be practical for them. She’d grown up in the home, moved away, and returned to care for her aging parents both of whom have passed.

Then the most remarkable thing occurred. Ann asked to be excused and went inside. We were fearful that the interview was over. However, Ann soon returned with two original watercolor paintings of the home created by Neutra during the design process. The gorgeous artwork had never been published or exhibited. Jaws dropped. Stunned faces gasped for air. And, then a camera shoot took place. It was surreal. Ann, thank you for this once in a lifetime experience!
ABOUT SESAH

The Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (SESAH) is a regional chapter of the national Society of Architectural Historians and includes twelve states - Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

The nonprofit organization holds an annual meeting, publishes a twice-a-year newsletter and an annual journal, ARRIS, and presents annual awards, including the “Best of the South” preservation award.

SESAH was founded in 1982 at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta to promote scholarship on architecture and related subjects and to serve as a forum for ideas among architectural historians, architects, preservationists, and others involved in professions related to the built environment. The annual meeting features scholarly paper sessions, business meeting, study tours, and a keynote lecture by a national leader in the field. SESAH members come from across the U.S.

www.sesah.org

SAVE THE DATE!

29th SESAH Annual Meeting
Charleston, South Carolina
October 26-29, 2011

RATIO Architects, Inc.
135 E. Martin Street Suite 101
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601
Attn: Benjamin Ross (Indianapolis)

Please notify the Treasurer of address changes.