

News Update

February 2000

Capitol Theatre Open Day - 4 March

RMIT University which purchased the Capitol Theatre in Melbourne last May is hosting an Open Day of the theatre on Saturday 4 March from 10am to 6pm, and welcoming everyone to view the completed first stage of the theatre's refurbishment undertaken with funding from the Melbourne Heritage Restoration Fund.

The sweeping foyers, lounges and balconies that were closed off to the public in the mid 1960s will be open, and the spectacular coloured ceiling lights have been "relamped". The theatre is at 113 Swanston Street, Melbourne and entry is by gold coin donation.

'Teaching Heritage' website

This website, to be launched in late March, aims to inform NSW secondary school teachers and students of the range and diversity of educational programs and materials that link heritage with the history and geography syllabuses.

The website content will include an extensive illustrated section on the Griffins' work which will include Castlecrag, Willoughby Incinerator and other works as well as their philosophy and international influences and also a commentary by historian Shirley Fitzgerald on the now demolished Pymont Incinerator. The site is being developed by the Office of the Board of Studies in collaboration with the NSW Heritage Office and the NSW Department of Education and Training and will be able to be found on the web by doing a search for "Griffin" or "heritage".

Griffin story 'Demolition Job' in *The Australian*

Review of *Beyond Architecture: MM & WBG in America, Australia & India* edited by Anne Watson, and *The Griffins in Australia and India* edited by Jeff Turnbull and Peter Y. Navaretti in *The Australian's*

Review of Books Wed. 9 Feb: A well researched and fascinating essay by Tim Bonyhady describes the 'wantonness' that has characterised bureaucratic attitudes to Griffin masterpieces in Australia.

TV documentary on the Griffins

A Film Australia documentary *City of Dreams* is currently being filmed in Sydney and Melbourne. The documentary explores the collaboration between Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin, their struggle with unyielding bureaucracy and their passionate commitment to an architecture that expressed an affinity between the human spirit and the natural environment. Director Belinda Mason and producer Gaby Mason have filmed interviews with Griffin experts, as well as former Castlecrag residents and one of Walter's former apprentices. They have also filmed Griffin designed buildings in Melbourne, and in Castlecrag and Avalon in Sydney.

City of Dreams is due to be screened on ABC TV later this year.

Canberra Incinerator awarded grant

The Royal Canberra Golf Club has been awarded \$11,880 for an ACT Heritage Grant to complete essential conservation works to the building. These works, to be carried out this year, aim to arrest deterioration of the fabric of the building and will include work to the roof, walls, parapet, cleaning and pigeon-proofing.

Amanda Myers

First issue of American newsletter

Congratulations to the Walter Burley Griffin Society of America, founded in November 1998, for the publication of their first newsletter. In the newsletter president of the American Society Mr Peter Burley Griffin, grandson of Ralph Griffin, Walter's younger brother, writes that "Geography adds considerably to the challenge of a Griffin society in America."

The sites and resources are scattered throughout the Mid-west, with clusters in the Chicago area and Mason City, Iowa, but with individual resources as far as Louisiana, Michigan, Connecticut and California."

Associate Professor Paul Kruty, editor of the newsletter, explains that "We can only hope that the Griffins' time in America has finally arrived. After the groundswell of activity in the 1960s and '70s, including the magnificent work of *The Prairie School Review*, the publication of H. Allen Brooks' 1972 book, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries*, and such events as the 1978 conference in Milwaukee called "The Prairie School Tradition", interest in the subject, and the role of Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin in it, was overshadowed by the burgeoning cult of Frank Lloyd Wright. While this has produced a remarkable body of Wrightian scholarship in its own right, it has had unfortunate effects both of clouding the issue of just what the Prairie School was, and of dampening enthusiasm for anyone but Wright among the followers of Louis Sullivan. While Australian Scholars have long taken the lead in documenting and reassessing the role of the Griffins in 20th-century architecture, only in the last decade has a real dialogue begun between America and Australia that has permitted an understanding of the complementary roles of the two continents that were joined in the Griffins' work. The three day symposium held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in October 1997, and its Australian counterpart, hosted by The University of Melbourne a year later, are clear expressions of this new co-operation."

American Griffin documentary wins Emmy

As reported in the American Griffin Newsletter *Walter Burley Griffin: In His Own Right*, the documentary produced in 1998 by Alison Davis of WILL-TV, Urbana, Illinois, received a 1999 Telly Award, a national recognition of excellence in independent films. It also received an

honourable mention for best cultural documentary from the Central Education Network and most recently, in October the documentary was awarded a prestigious Emmy.

WBGs committee

At the eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Society held on Sunday 24 October 1999 at the National Trust's Stella James House, Avalon, Sydney the following committee members were elected:

President: Adrienne Kabos
 Vice President: Professor James Weirick
 Treasurer: Maggie Chambers
 Secretary: Kerry McKillop
 Committee:

Emeritus Professor Carrick Chambers,
 John Kabos, Andrew Kirk, John McInerney,
 Associate Professor Anna Rubbo, Howard Rubie,
 Akky Van Ogtrop, Anne Watson.

The Society welcomes Andrew Kirk to the committee. Sincere thanks go to retiring founding Committee Member Sue Randle for her invaluable assistance over the past eleven years including the last eight years as Councillor of Willoughby City Council. Sue's wonderful energy and organisational talents have been great assets for the Society. During her two terms as Councillor she has been an outstanding advocate of the natural and built heritage in Willoughby City.

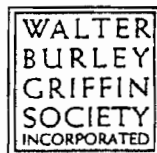
Conferences:

- **Material Evidence: Conserving Historic Building Fabric** on 13 & 14 April organised by NSW Heritage Office and to be held at RAlA, Potts Point, Sydney. Further info contact Elizabeth Broomhead 9849 9573
- **Urban Visions-Public Space** to be held on 18 March organised by Historic Houses Trust of NSW at Museum of Sydney. Further info contact 9251 5988

News items/articles wanted

News items and articles are welcomed from readers. Please contact the editor on Fax 02 9958 2060 or e-mail: designcircle@dial1.net

MEMBERSHIP FORM



MEMBERSHIP

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

Date: _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please make cheque payable to
 Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. and post it to
 The Treasurer at 7 Mackenzie Street, Lindfield NSW 2070.

The Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. was established in 1988 and aims to create a greater awareness and appreciation of the Griffins' town planning and architecture and thereby encourage the conservation of their internationally significant work. The Society produces a newsletter and regularly organises meetings with guest speakers. If you would like to join the Society in Australia fill out the accompanying form.

Individual	\$ 15pa
Student	\$ 5pa
Individual overseas	\$ 25pa
Community organisations	\$ 25pa
Business organisations	\$ 50pa