

Doc 151

Thomas S. Conlon (1934-1990) Pavilion Hotel Papers, 1968-1971

Scope & Content

This collection contains the files of Thomas Shaun Conlon (1934-1990), Chairman of Friends of the Pavilion, relating to the controversy over the fate of the Pavilion Hotel near the State House in Montpelier, Vermont, 1967-1971. The collection includes correspondence; personal notes; newspaper articles; governmental, architectural and engineering studies; and publications concerning one of the early battles of the historic preservation movement in Vermont. This controversy gained national prominence in 1969 when Ada Louise Huxtable, architecture critic of the *New York Times* wrote an article entitled "They Know What They Don't Like" (Folder 1). Friends of the Pavilion donated these files to the Vermont Historical Society in December 1970. The collection is in one document storage box and consumes 1 linear foot of shelf space.

The collection includes correspondence with the Vermont Historical Society and its director Charles T. Morrissey; Governors Deane C. Davis and Phillip H. Hoff; Robert Burley, architect for the project; William Kearns, chairman, Board of State Buildings; Vermont Department of Administration; Pizzagalli Construction Company; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; National Trust for Historic Preservation; and U.S. Department of Interior, Historic American Buildings Survey.

The collection also contains correspondence of Wesley and Miriam Herwig of Randolph, Vermont, about the same issue. They gave this material plus some newspaper clippings to the Vermont Historical Society in July 1993. The clippings have been incorporated into the correspondence.

The Pavilion Hotel was a "High Victorian" structure dating from 1875. Because of its location adjacent to the Vermont State House, and because notable visitors and legislators often stayed there, it was known as "Vermont's Third House." In 1966, the Pavilion was bought by the State of Vermont and closed as a hotel. The question then was whether to restore and remodel the building for use as state offices or to tear it down to make space for a parking lot or a modern office building. After many legislative votes and political maneuverings, the proposal of the Pizzagalli Construction Company of South Burlington, Vermont, was to raze the building and rebuild it using the same facade on a modern office structure was accepted. The new "hotel" was dedicated in 1970.

Biography

Thomas S. Conlon, leader of the group of concerned citizens who wanted to preserve the building, was born in Waterbury, Vermont, on December 9, 1934. After graduating from Dartmouth in 1956, he entered the Penn Law School completing the course in 1959. In 1963, he became tax counsel for National Life Insurance Company.

He served on the Montpelier School Board and the Montpelier Planning Commission, was president of the Vermont Historical Society (1973-1977), was president of the Barre Opera House Board of Trustees, and was Chairman of the Friends of the Pavilion Committee. He died May 18, 1990, after a long battle with cancer (*Times-Argus*, May 19, 1990, Folder 0).

Related Collections

Catalogued material in the Vermont Historical Society library's collection may be found in the card catalog under "Montpelier (Vt.) - Pavilion Hotel." There is additional material, including clippings, in the uncatalogued pamphlet files under the same heading.

Other related sources of information at the Vermont Historical Society include a film the Pizzagalli Construction Company made of their work on the Pavilion entitled "Blueprint to the Past" (film A-14, video C-26 copy 2). Photographs of the Pavilion are in the photo, postcard, and stereoview collections (F-HO-Montpelier-Pavilion, P-HO-Montpelier-Pavilion and S-HO-Montpelier-Pavilion). Posters for events at the Pavilion Hotel may be located in the broadside collection. The Vermont Historical Society's own archives also contain architectural drawings and photographs of the building since its reconstruction in 1971.

The VHS museum collection contains several artifacts from the old hotel.

Organization

The papers are arranged in seven series and are stored in one document storage carton. The seven series reflect the major players in the controversy: the state, city, architects and engineers, private citizens, and the federal government. Every effort has been made to keep Conlon's notes in their original order. Some of the clippings and many of his personal notes are not dated, so the relevancy and the logic of the sequence are sometimes unclear. The controversy over the Pavilion's fate was so convoluted Ada Louise Huxtable called it a "performance of devastatingly ludicrous logic that Gilbert and Sullivan would envy" (*Sacramento Bee*, April 19, 1970). The researcher may well discover pertinent information in many folders.

Inventory

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I. History

Folder 1 History
(Includes outcome of controversy which resulted in reconstruction.)

II. State

- 2 Vermont, General Assembly, Institutions Committee
3 _____, _____, Senate
4 _____, _____, House of Representatives
5 _____, _____, Legislative Council Committee on the Pavilion [Hotel],
1968
6 _____, _____, Leaseback Committee, 1969
(Includes Pizzagalli proposal for reconstruction.)
7 _____, _____, Statutes and Bills
8 _____, Governor, Philip H. Hoff
9 _____, _____, Deane C. Davis
10 _____, Capitol Complex Master Plan
11 Vermont tourist industry

III. City

- 12 Montpelier, Vt., City Council

IV. Architects and Engineers

- 13 Robert Burley, architect
14 Technical data
(Includes estimates for a variety of solutions to Pavilion problem.)

V. Private

- 15 Friends of the Pavilion, organization
16 _____, "A Pavilion Anthology," April 1969
17 _____, interaction with Vermont General Assembly
18 _____, correspondence
19 Thomas S. Conlon, speeches
20 _____, Vermont organizations
21 _____, "What's Going to Happen to Vermont's Third House," *Yankee*,
December 1968

-
- 22 Wesley and Miriam Herwig, correspondence
 - 23 Public opinion, newspaper articles
 - 24 _____, individual responses
 - 25 Vermont Historical Society

VI. Federal

- 26 Historic American Buildings Survey
- 27 Historic sites (not Pavilion Hotel)
- 28 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

VII. Unidentified

- 29 Unidentified

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