

2002 GENERAL TOOLS AWARD - Charles Parrott

Mr Packard opened by stating that no one in this country has been more closely involved in industrial archaeology for so long as our recipient of this years General tools award. His work in IA goes back to the late 1960s. He was one of the first employees of HAER. He was also one of the founders of the SIA. Although he has never sought elected position in the national organization, he has always been a loyal SIA member, taking on important roles in organizing conferences and tours, giving many presentations, and helping to make SNEC one of the most active chapters. His most important contributions to industrial archaeology have been in his professional work as an award-winning historical architect and park designer. Throughout his incredibly productive professional career, he has focused on industrial communities and structures. The waterpower system at the Slater Mill Historic Site could not have been re-created without his design skills. We would not have the Lowell National Historical Park if it had not been for the HAER survey that he co-supervised. Neither the city of Lowell nor its Park would be as successful without his constant efforts for more than two decades. He was the chief historical architect of the Lowell Historical Preservation Commission from 1980 to 1995. Now he is a chief architect for the Lowell National Historical Park.

Chuck Parrot may have had some conflicts that forced him to miss a couple SIA conferences since the founding meeting in Washington, DC, but I remember seeing him at almost all of them. His slide-illustrated talks have graced the program time after time. He helped Pete Molloy and Pat Malone organize the first Lowell Conference in 1974 and he was one of the principal coordinators and tour directors of the 1984 Boston Conference. The Boston guidebooks and the some of h best tour maps SIA has ever produced were part of his responsibilities. At the same time, SIA and SNEC sponsored a combined meeting with TICCIH, a monumental task that taxed the endurance of everyone involved.

Chuck wrote the guidebook and ran the TICCIH "excursion" in Lowell. When you ask for Chuck Parrott's help on some SIA activity, you get it. He loves the SIA and he pays his dues, literally and figuratively. He does his work quietly and without a lot of fanfare, but he is always there when you need him.

I am not going to try to list all the IA projects that Chuck Parrott has done as a private consultant or as an employee of the Historic American Engineering Record, the Preservation Assistance Division of the NPS, the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, the Lowell National Historical Park, or John Milner Associates. Chuck's dedication to industrial research never falters. Although he has never been an academic, he has published a fine book on historic buildings in Lowell, several guidebooks, and an article with Pat Malone for IA. He has also been a contributing author to many archaeological reports. His photographic skills are very impressive, and I consider him the best draftsman I know. time to show the quality of IA recording.

Many of industrial archeologists have learned to do field recording by following Chuck around industrial sites with a tape in their hand. No one is better than he is at this key step in the

recording process, and no one is more generous with his time when an emergency recording project comes up. Chuck is always willing to teach people how to record and very patient with beginners. He shares his skills willingly, always eager to improve the state of our field.

Without Charles Parrott, the Lowell National Historical Park and its environs would simply and emphatically not be the place, the showplace, of industrial archeology that they have become under his guidance and direction. His influence on that scene has been profound, and it is visible to anyone who drives down Merrimack Street and sees the impressive reconstruction of the industrial city's street scape that has occurred under grant programs he has watch-dogged, or who drive past the many industrial buildings restored, redeveloped, and re-used under his stewardship, or who walks along the miles of walkways along the power canals. These walkways bring people to Lowell's power system in ways never before possible. Parrott not only designed them, from paths to fencing to lighting, but supervised every detail of their construction. His work now transforms the meaning of the city for residents and visitors alike on a daily basis. Even the fans attending Lowell's minor league baseball team in its new ballpark--a sign of the revitalization of the city Parrott's work has supported--exclaim over the restored, dusky-red lenticular truss bridge over the Merrimack River lying beyond the outfield fence, that benefited from Parrott's research, including the discovery of its surprising original color.

Parrott is a rarity among architects, possessing a sophisticated understanding of the architectural past. His devotion to the task of re-creating Lowell, through grant-supervision, design, and construction, has kept him in his position there for years beyond the planned expiration of the government's mandate for such work. Many millions of the government's dollars have been well-spent because of his dedication and insights. His mark is distinct, from boardinghouses to bandstands, to the Promenade on the Great River Wall of the Northern Canal. The city and the park, and all who come to them, are the beneficiaries of his elegant design, his unflagging attention to detail, his efforts to present, preserve, and make accessible (literally and figuratively), this great industrial city.