

## **Boots, Babies & Blues (and Gauged Ears)**

Austin: a city that is a twisted compilation of everyone who hates Texas. But in all honesty, Austin, Texas was one of the hippest cities I've ever been to. Not only does every man between the ages of 16 and 30 have varying sizes of gauged ears, every young couple have an adorably hipster child, and live music can be heard everywhere at every time of day, Austin is home to stark preservationists.

As the host of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference 2010, Austin sets a wonderful example for city and main street preservation. 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Congress Street are picturesque American city-scapes. A big focus of the conference was the future of cities and bringing our building style back to the city-scapes like Austin, where destinations are within walking distance, and an auto-centric lifestyle is not a reality.

The learning part of the Conference was set up in a series of sessions scattered throughout the Hilton Convention Center. Every hour and a half, we could choose from an expansive list of workshops to attend. I had the pleasure of attending many on green building and LEED certification, window restoration, preservation careers and Agritourism.

One workshop I attended with a few of my UMW colleagues was on the LEED-EB: O&M certification. This certification (Operations and Maintenance) is used for building that already stand, that want to renovate for "Green" status. This program was directly applied for me in our fight to change our University's Master Plan. If the O&M program can be used, the University's building can receive credits for maintaining historic fabric, installing better efficiency plumbing and heating, restoring historic windows (that now my colleague Cameron and I know how to do!!), and for positive atmosphere based on details and common space restoration. This session in particular sparked perfect relevancy in my life, and my career here at Mary Wash.

Another session that was particularly meaningful for me was the presentation on Agritourism in Washington State. This session married my two majors- Historic Preservation and Geography- is a seamless union. I study people and cultures in one discipline and structures, heritage tourism and place in another. In Washington, Agritourism has begun to bring eaters out to where their food comes from, therefore economically promoting the farmers and farms that produce it. Inns with special programs and food, farm dinners, local food restaurants and more have steamed out of this movement. This also connected to my senior research on food security and urban gardens' role in solving food injustice. This session was the last session on the last day, but I found an outlet for my passions and academics to come together. Not only did I get to taste yummy apple cider and learn about farm programs in Washington, we had a local Austin farmer speak to us about her journey with urban farming.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in Austin, Texas, was an enriching experience for me. I was given the opportunity to meet contacts in the field, learn about future employment opportunities, and experience a daily change in my life plan. I am one who appreciates long-term goals, but is willing to change my course at the flip of the proverbial coin. I certainly was tested in my ability to cope with all of the information being thrown in my direction- no/grad school, internship/job, burger flipping/PhD, architecture/green/tourism/hippie-dom etc- but now have the resources to investigate different future paths. The conference was food for thought and action, and I can't wait to munch into it!