Preservation Matters!

Speeches from the 2007 National Preservation Conference
St. Paul, Minnesota
Winter 2008
This issue of Forum Journal features speeches from the 2007 National Preservation Conference in the Twin Cities. Award-winning singer-songwriter Cari Cole kicked off the opening plenary session with this specially written song, co-written with Alex Moe.

Heart of My Town
by Alex Moe and Cari Cole

Behind the counter we worked our days
At the hardware store on Fifth and Main
Husband and I, pioneers with a map
Had come from the shore to Mamaroneck

It’s gone now, with half the town,
to make room for parking places
The old school yard, the corner store,
will there be any traces?

CHORUS:
Heart of my town
Railway station
Built us a nation
Part of this town
On the sidewalks of Main Street
On the tracks of Union Station

When I was a girl we tore out across the plains
The sky was burning red, the smell of fire and sage
Daddy got a job working with the grain
I’d sit and watch the river move and listen for the trains

Out where there was nothing, just the sky and the steam
I found a home there waiting, heard something calling me
Life in the city and across the prairie land
What we made, we made with our hands

CHORUS
Where there was a field, they saw a town
Built it up from the rocky ground
In the center they put a square
To this day we still gather there

As the sun slips down over St. Paul town
Rooftops and roads, history layers the ground
Out on the back streets and over Highland pond
The stories of our children will live on and on

CHORUS

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Landmark Center. Photo courtesy of St. Paul RCVA.
President’s Report

Richard Moe

The National Preservation Conference is always a highlight of the preservation calendar. And this year’s conference is really special for me because we’re meeting—for the first time ever—in my home state of Minnesota and in the cities where I spent a major part of my life. I regret that it’s taken 15 years for me to get us here, but it’s great to be back in the Twin Cities, especially because there’s a new preservation spirit here.

Preservation was a bit late in taking root here. To be sure, there were some important early success stories: Citizens rallied to prevent the demolition of St. Paul’s historic courthouse and turned it into Landmark Center; and pioneering efforts led by Weiming Lu transformed the area known as L owertown from an enclave of shabby warehouses into a vibrant inner-city village. But these were bright spots in an otherwise dark picture. Humorist Ogden Nash could have been thinking of the Twin Cities when he wrote, “Progress may have been a good thing at one time, but it went on a little too long.” Misguided notions of what constitutes “progress” robbed Minneapolis and St. Paul of many historic buildings, and time and weather and neglect destroyed many others over the years.

Happily, those “bad old days” are gone. Today the Twin Cities are honoring their past in a way that also serves their future. Preservation is improving the livability and economic vitality of older residential and commercial areas. Vigorous smart growth initiatives are fighting sprawl and encouraging reinvestment in older areas. Historic buildings are being given innovative new uses—like the Grain Belt Brewhouse, a former brewery that now houses offices, and Midtown Exchange, a former Sears warehouse transformed into a huge residential/retail/office complex. Both projects have received awards from the National Trust.

In the most dramatic turnaround of all, the long-neglected riverfront has been rediscovered. When I left Minnesota 35 years ago, it was virtually impossible to access the river or even catch a glimpse of the St. Anthony Falls, which powered the mills that made Minneapolis the flour-milling capital of the world. Today a riverfront park provides a close-up look at the falls, the remains of the mills, and the canals and tailraces that made the whole complex work. A two-mile-long heritage trail winds through the park, crossing the Mississippi on the restored Stone Arch Bridge built in 1882. The area known as St. Anthony Main has already become a lively entertainment destination, and the ongoing renovation of historic buildings in the area, coupled with new construction, is sparking the emergence of a real riverfront neighborhood.

The rebirth of the riverfront neighborhood is mirrored in other communities from coast to coast. People everywhere are recognizing that, as our conference theme states, “Preservation Matters!” our job—our challenge—is to help more people realize it, to move preservation fully and permanently into the mainstream of American life and culture. For the next few minutes, I want to describe for you a major effort that will help us move toward that goal.
Sustainability Initiative

We’re launching an important initiative to emphasize preservation’s role in addressing environmental concerns and in fostering sustainable design and development in America’s communities.

Our movement has gone through many phases in its history. In the early years, the emphasis was on historical and cultural values; preservationists saved iconic landmarks—such as Mount Vernon—as patriotic shrines. Later, the focus shifted to preservation’s economic aspects; we preached the dollars-and-cents benefits of adaptive use, Main Street revitalization, and heritage tourism. More recently, we’ve emphasized social values, stressing preservation’s value in enhancing community livability, combating the rootlessness of modern society, celebrating the contributions of diverse segments of our population, and strengthening the bonds that unite and identify us as Americans.

Now we’re on the threshold of a new phase, as growing numbers of people are concerned about the degradation of the environment and our relentless consumption of irreplaceable energy and natural resources. Preservation certainly isn’t the solution to these problems, but it can be—and should be—an important part of the solution.

We all know that preservation offers a “smart growth” alternative to sprawl that consumes land and other resources. By revitalizing a traditional business district, we help reduce the demand for new shopping centers that devour open space and productive farmland. By reinvesting in existing communities, we make wise use of the millions of dollars already spent on streets, utilities, and public services instead of abandoning them and duplicating them in sprawling new developments.

Preserving and reusing sound older buildings is what “sustainability” is all about. This isn’t a new concept: Decades ago, preservation was often cited as the “ultimate recycling,” and many of you may remember the 1980 Preservation Week poster that represented the concept of embodied energy by showing an old building as a gas can. The word “sustainability” didn’t appear on that poster, but that’s exactly what the message was all about: It takes energy to make bricks and steel and concrete, and more energy to haul the materials to a building site, and still more to dig a foundation and construct a building—and all of that embodied energy gets wasted when the building is demolished.

Here’s another important point: Contrary to what many people believe, older buildings can “go green.” Many older buildings already incorporate environmentally friendly systems—like big, operable windows that provide natural light and ventilation, for example—and these features still work, and still make sense. The marketplace now offers a wide range of products that can help make older buildings more energy efficient without compromising the historic character that makes them unique and appealing. And there’s a large and growing number of rehab/reuse projects that offer good models of sustainable design and construction.

With these facts in mind, making preservation a key component of the nation’s sustainability agenda is the sensible thing to do—but it won’t happen unless we insist on it. We need changes in policy at the federal, state, and local levels. We need incentives to encourage architects, developers, and property owners to recognize the principle of embodied energy and to incorporate green technology in their rehab projects.

To get those things, we need facts and figures to back up our contention that the greenest building is one that’s already built—and gathering that kind of data will be a big part of our Sustainability Initiative. Here’s an example of what I mean: We’ll pull
Modernism highlighted session on Minnesota by Christina Morris. Modernist buildings has launched a new protections for on the Saint John’s resources from the recent past. Photo such significant Marcel Breuer’s that figure with the amount energy efficient than new ones, for example. Most of us believe it—but according to a study conducted by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, it’s not always true. We want to replace myth with fact, because we believe the facts are on our side.

Our Sustainability Initiative aims to demonstrate that preservation is relevant, that it really does matter. It will show that preservation makes sense—not just for the soul, but also for the pocketbook and the environment. You’ll be hearing more about this effort in the coming months, and I believe you’ll agree with me that it’s one of the most important things the National Trust is doing today.

Preserving the Recent Past and Modernism

While our Sustainability Initiative is getting underway, we’ll keep working on some issues that have already kept us busy for some time—issues such as teardowns and the threat to historic structures and cultural resources on public lands, for example.

We’ll also continue to insist on the importance of preserving landmarks of Modernism.

In 2002, just 39 years after it opened, the innovative Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis appeared on our 11 Most Endangered list. When preservationists were fighting to save the Guthrie—a fight that we ultimately lost, by the way—one of the comments we kept hearing was, “That theater isn’t historic, it’s modern. And it isn’t old enough for preservationists to be concerned with.”

One of the greatest challenges currently facing us is persuading others that post-war architecture and landscapes do have historic significance and therefore are worth saving. It’s not a new problem: Many 19th-century Parisians thought the Eiffel Tower was an eyesore, and it hasn’t been long since Victorian buildings were considered ugly and Art Deco wasn’t worth noticing, much less preserving. It takes time for people to fully appreciate historic significance and artistic merit—but while art, music, and literature can simply wait for their day to come, unappreciated buildings tend to disappear.

Now the National Trust is spearheading a new initiative to focus on the Recent Past and Modernism. The initiative aims, among other things, to produce a resource guide for recognizing and preserving the recent past, and to establish a network of communities and organizations with an interest in preserving Modernism. Earlier this year, we celebrated the public opening of Philip Johnson’s Glass House, the latest addition to our collection of Historic Sites and an icon of Modernism. In New Canaan, Conn., where the Glass House is located, the staff at the site and in our Northeast Office have launched a survey that will document 90+ architect-designed Modern homes and landscapes as a model for similar surveys in other communities.

Joni Mitchell sang it years ago, and it’s painfully true: “You don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.” We can’t let that song become a dirge for our legacy from the recent past.

Recovery from Hurricane Katrina

Finally, we’ll continue our recovery work on the Gulf Coast.

It’s been a little over two years since Hurricane Katrina devastated communities in Mississippi and the city of New Orleans. I’m enormously proud of the National Trust’s quick response to the disaster and of what we’re doing to ensure that the region’s heritage, culture, and distinctive sense of place don’t get lost in the recovery process.

Our field office staff, working closely with our local partners and assisted by a small army of volunteers, has done an amazing job of coordinating our work on the ground. Our advocacy efforts helped persuade Congress to provide $50 million in grants for historic structures and to expand existing tax credits to provide incentives for rebuilding and revitalization. Our inspection
teams have helped prevent the needless demolition of salvageable structures. Our grants and technical assistance have helped a number of families make their homes livable again—and their work has inspired others to rebuild.

Recovery is moving at an achingly slow pace, admittedly, but it is happening. Plenty of brave people are rehabbing their homes and businesses, demonstrating a determination to put their communities and their lives back together—but they still face an uphill struggle. Recently, in a misguided attempt to “step up” the comeback process, the City of New Orleans announced plans to demolish as many as 10,000 structures over the next year—including some buildings that have already been rehabbed. As you can imagine, we’ve been working hard to alert unsuspecting homeowners and convince officials that you can’t save a city by destroying it.

I look forward to the day when there won’t be a need for another annual report on our recovery work on the Gulf Coast. I believe that day is coming, but it isn’t here yet—and I want to reiterate what I said two years ago: The National Trust is committed to ensuring preservation-based recovery on the Gulf Coast, and we’ll be there for as long as it takes.

Building Capacity to Do Even More

One more very important preview of things to come: Earlier this year, our Board of Trustees unanimously voted to conduct the second comprehensive fundraising campaign in the history of this organization. It will be a three-year effort, with a goal that will be considerably larger than the $135 million we raised in our first campaign, which took five years. Its aim is to bring new and expanded resources to the field of preservation—to strengthen field services, to expand the capabilities of our partner organizations, to create new sources of funding—all to help you do the work of preservation better in your community. I can sum it up in four words: This one’s for you.

In that connection, I have some good news: Thanks to a generous initial pledge from Henry and Virginia Sweatt of Wayzata and matching gifts from others, we have established the Sweatt Preservation Fund for Minnesota, which will award grants across the state to make preservation work. This is exactly the kind of thing we want to achieve through our campaign: to provide the support you need—including information and capacity-building as well as money—to make preservation work in your community. You’ve been marvelously generous in the past, and I know we can count on you to support us in this exciting new effort.

Everyone who works in preservation knows that our job is never done. We win victories—happily, we’re winning more and more of them these days—but there’s always a new challenge to face, a new opportunity to embrace.

A moment ago I spoke of the changes in the preservation movement over the years. These changes show that ours is a dynamic movement. It remains rooted in a profound respect for history—but we’re not just hanging on to yesterday; we’re building tomorrow.

With your support, we’ll keep working to help everyone in the country recognize the truth of our conference theme: Preservation Matters!—and it can make a real difference in the appearance and livability of communities all over America.

Richard Moe is president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

We’ve been working hard to alert unsuspecting homeowners and convince officials that you can’t save a city by destroying it.
Spearheading Preservation Action: My Personal Challenge

Nellie Langworth

Some great stroke of luck in September of 1975 brought me to the office of Tersh Boasberg, a public interest Washington lawyer and a founder of Preservation Action, where he offered me the opportunity to become the initial staff of the new grassroots lobbying organization. I let him know that I knew absolutely nothing about two things—historic preservation and the Congress—but it didn’t seem to phase him.

How to start? I quickly realized that preservationists are passionate. I had heard of those who chained themselves to bulldozers to prevent a teardown, so I had to find a passion for preservation. In Washington, D.C., I was concerned about the Willard Hotel—empty for 18 years with a roof and broken windows. I could be passionate about the Willard as it was where lobbying began in the days of President Lincoln and, coincidentally, my parents had spent their wedding night there. But saving the Willard was a national problem hampered by massive red tape.

Then my phone rang and it was two students from Smith College, my alma mater. The board of trustees had voted to demolish the Alumnae Gymnasium to make room for a modern library addition. The 1891 gym had been donated to the college by alumnae and was the site of the first women’s basketball game. While no longer useful for physical education, the building had features that could be incorporated into the library addition. The battle to save the building was difficult, lasting for months and requiring many trips to Northampton. We were a small group of dedicated alumnae who were tested in many ways but finally achieved a victory. Features from the gym have enhanced the library in many ways, including providing an exciting space where trustees meet and special events take place. I was now passionate about preservation.

Next, the Congress. From the beginning in 1975, I was guided to Capitol Hill by many preservation organizations. The San Antonio Conservation Society sent me to Sen. Lloyd Bentsen; the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois sent me to Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee; the Landmarks Association of St. Louis sent Rep. Dick Gephardt; and the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans sent Sen. Bennett Johnston, and others to Sen. Paul Tsongas, Sen. Patrick Leahy, and Rep. John Seiberling. All of these outstanding members understood and supported preservation, and their staff clued me in on the process, always emphasizing that grassroots support was a key to success.

A Grassroots Partner for the Historic Preservation Movement

Preservation Action was founded to be a grassroots lobbying partner of the existing preservation organizations. In 1975 the law seriously limited the ability of charitable 501(c)(3) organizations—such as the National Trust—to lobby. While Preservation Action is a charitable organization—a 501(c)(4)—its members cannot take charitable deductions for their involvement.

Preservation Action members stand ready to contact their members of the House or Senate on national issues. Through letters, phone calls, and visits to Capitol Hill, preservationists share with congressional members the impact of legislation—positive and negative—on their town, city, and state. The organization is currently developing programs to broaden the activities of members to engage Congress in their work in the states through tours, in-district meetings, press activity, celebrations highlighting the value of federal policy, candidate forums and surveys, and interviews with legislators.

Some years ago, NCSHPO and Preservation Action joined forces to have a Preservation Lobby Day, in early March, for briefings and lobbying on Capitol Hill. As many as 300 people have come to the nation’s capital, representing local communities, states and tribes, and the membership of Preservation Action, the National Trust, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO), and the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. It has been successful and has produced good legislative initiatives.

Preservation Action’s current president is Heather MaIntosh, a certified lobbyist who is well known on Capitol Hill. The organization has 120 active board members, representing 41 states. To keep its membership current on national issues, Preservation Action produces a weekly legislative newsletter that provides “reader-friendly” information about the Congress and federal agencies and includes interviews, with photographs, of important members of both the House and Senate. To learn more go to the website: www.Preservationaction.org.

Preservation Successes Since 1975

Over the past 30 years, we have seen a growing recognition that historic preservation works! In the ‘60s and ‘70s, there was little that could be done as the bludgeoning interstate highway program destroyed our cities, replacing historic neighborhoods with...
sprawling lanes of concrete. However, with the initiation of the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit in 1980, we had a tool that created an incentive for the reuse of historic buildings and brought people back downtown to live and work. The rehab credit has been a great success since 1980: It has leveraged more than $33 billion in communities of all sizes, as underused historic buildings have become handsome offices, rental housing, and retail space.

Federal agencies also began to see the value of historic preservation. The Federal Highway Administration has poured millions of dollars into the transportation enhancement program since the early 1990s, a program that includes historic preservation as an eligible enhancement. The success of this can be seen in the rehabilitation of vacant railroad stations into a wide variety of community uses. The General Service Administration has actively rehabilitated and reused its historic buildings and has made the case that the older buildings are more energy efficient than many of their newer structures. Since 2002, we have seen the federal agriculture programs include the eligibility of farms with historic and archeological resources for easement programs that keep the family farm in agricultural use rather than becoming a box church or a treeless grouping of ranchettes. And we have expanded preservation responsibilities in federal, state, and local governments and the private sector through amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 in 1980, 1992, and 2006.

The changing attitude about historic buildings has been enhanced by the partnership of many groups working together at national, state, and local levels. At the federal level, the National Trust, the National Park Service, NCSHPO, NATHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Preservation Action are in contact on issues as they arise.

Vigilance is also a requirement in working with the Congress and the federal government. It was quite a surprise in 2005 when the House Natural Resources Committee announced legislation to limit Section 106 responsibility for federal agency projects to only those properties already listed in or eligible for the National Register. At the same time, the same committee began action to seriously limit the use of the Environmental Policy Act. In addition to the national partnership, the American Cultural Resources Association, the Society for Historical Archaeology, and the Society for American Archaeology joined in the successful effort that left both laws “unaltered.”

Proving That Grassroots Lobbying Can Succeed

The historic rehabilitation tax credits were enacted in 1980 and were successful from the beginning in transforming shabby historic buildings into exciting office space and rental housing. Credit use moved smoothly until 1986 when President Reagan and the Congress pressed for major tax reform which called for the elimination of all tax credits, including the historic rehab credit.

This would have been a devastating blow to preservation and, as Preservation Action’s president, I decided to test the success of grassroots lobbying. I scheduled breakfasts, lunches, and dinners for tax act users with the assistance of our members in major cities from coast to coast. I traveled to 20 cities in 6 weeks asking those using the credits to write, call, and take a member of Congress on a tour of a rehabilitated building. The project was known as “The Tax Task Force” and included a weekly update: “Tax Task Force News.” The response was incredible. The historic rehab credit survived and was one of a very few business credits retained.

Life After Preservation Action

I retired from Preservation Action in 1998 to turn the gavel over to a younger president. However, I have not left the field! I am a government affairs consultant for the American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA) and the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) and, among other ventures, have moved historic preservation into the farm bill. The issues are the same for professionals in the fields of cultural resource management and archeology and the memberships have proven to be a strong partner in the grassroots efforts on Capitol Hill.

How an Idea Can Become a Law

Lobbying the Congress is good fun and very rewarding. Let’s examine a real lobbying activity that happened in 2002. A meeting on a cold snowy day in January at the Society for Historical Archaeology was attended by representatives of a number of organizations and agencies concerned that farms with historic and archeological sites were being sold and demolished to make way for shopping centers, housing, and big box churches. There were no incentives to preserve historic farmland so farm acreage, barns, and historic homesteads were disappearing at an alarming rate.

We examined current programs in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and noted that the Farm Protection Program (FPP) had an easement program that was available for farms with “prime, unique or other productive soil” and “furthers a State and local policy consistent with the purposes of this program.” The light bulb went off…we could add just five additional words to the eligibility clause: “contains historical or archeological resources.” It would become a voluntary program for farms listed in or eligible for the National Register. The easement would be “in perpetuity” and the owner would agree to never divide or convert the land to non-
agricultural or development use. To compensate for the easement, the farmer’s land would be reevaluated and the farmer would be compensated for the loss of value with payments from the USDA (50 percent) and the easement holder (50 percent). The farmer could choose to make a donation of up to 25 percent of the value, reducing what the easement holder will pay.

The Society for Historical Archaeology wanted to go to the Congress with this proposal. As their consultant, I scheduled a full two days of meetings with staff of members on the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, including a session with the staff of the House Conservation Subcommittee of the Ag Committee.

All went well, including our meeting with the subcommittee staff. After thank-you notes had been sent, I phoned each of the staff we had met with. Almost everyone liked the idea but had higher priorities, which is a “no” in Washington. Then a call to the staff of Rep. Leonard Boswell (D-IA) brought the news that the congressman would offer this as an amendment in the House Agriculture Committee mark-up. The amendment was accepted, it was included in the House bill, accepted by the Senate, and became law. The program is working well and in the years 2005 and 2006, 155,000 acres with historical and archeological resources are now protected in perpetuity. Some of the outstanding easements include:

- The Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, New Gloucester, Maine.
- Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield, Springfield, Mo.
- DeHaan Ranch, Menard, Mont.
- Dan Fife Farm, Merrimack County, N.H.
- Aversboro Civil War Battlefield, Harnett County, N.C.
- Phipps Mill Creek Site, Cherokee, Iowa
- Weikert Farm, Gettysburg, Pa.
- Harewood Estate, Charles Town, W.V.
- The Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, New Gloucester, Maine.
- The Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, New Gloucester, Maine.

Nellie Longsworth, founding president of Preservation Action, is now a government affairs consultant. She received the Louise DuPont Crowninshield Award, the National Trust’s highest honor, at the 2007 National Preservation Conference.

Celebrating the City

I’d like to welcome you to the city of St. Paul. We know that we were not your first choice as a convention city. We know that you hoped to go somewhere more historic and better preserved, someplace like Venice or Stockholm, but you are here, so make the best of it—just as we do.

You’ve come, as you can see, at a glorious time of the year in Minnesota—the best time of the year absolutely to walk around our city, when we’re in the golden period of autumn and the beauty of the trees and this crispness, dryness of the air makes up for the flatness of the people whom you will meet here. We are not a particularly warm or friendly people here in Minnesota. Some people are, but they tend to be overmedicated or not from here, actually—possibly from Wisconsin.

We try to be friendly, but we don’t really mean it because we’ve learned to be leery of strangers, especially strangers who come from elsewhere. We suspect that you are going to go home and make belittling comments about us and even say mean things and make fun of us, so we would like to look down on you before you have a chance to look down on us. That’s the reason for that.

Now, if you are in trouble here, if your car got stuck in a snow drift, there would be a dozen people who would spring to your assistance, but this has less to do with charity and more to do with demonstrating a command of the situation.

I had a lot of misgivings about coming and speaking to you today because I have just turned 65 and I am sensitive about this, and it hit me hard when it happened. I was hoping to postpone it for a while. And I would like, now that I am a senior citizen, to start working against type and maybe dye my hair a light blue and get a nose plug and wear high-heeled shoes and do scandalous things.

Coming to the Ordway Theater and talking about historic preservation strikes me as a geezerish thing—so I just
I believe that we do have a moral duty... to preserve the grandeur and the beauty and the extravagance of the past which gives grandeur and beauty and extravagance to our own everyday lives which we dearly need.

What We’ve Lost

America went into a dark age of architecture about 50, 60 years ago when buildings started to be designed by accountants. And we have yet to fully emerge from this, although retro architecture is a nice start. People in America shop and they work and they worship and they go to school in interchangeable buildings that are warehouses with windows, and it’s depressing.

And when people propose to tear down the gaudy and the eccentric and the monumental and the brash and the exuberant in favor of depression then we are obliged to fight back in behalf of exuberance. It’s our duty. It’s a way of proving that we have eyes, that we have a brain, and that we live here and we care what it looks like, even if the people making the decisions do not.

I grew up in a little river town north of here that was gutted in the ’60s and ’70s by vandals in suits and ties. Kids with cans of spray paint were unable to accomplish a tiny fraction of the damage that businessmen could when it came to sheer destructiveness. Within a few years the old Carnegie Library was torn down in my town, a temple of books, and the old fire barn went and a couple of fine churches and the county courthouse—this big, highshouldered brick building with a great high steeple above the elm trees that sat in the middle of an old square with sidewalks coming in from the corners and park benches where people sat. It all went down in a big pile of bricks, and it was replaced by an enormous brick warehouse, and that was when my hometown died and became a suburb.

When I was a kid that old Carnegie Library was the symbol of freedom, and even if we didn’t say so, we knew it. You had the freedom of your own imagination. Even in a small town on the prairie in the 1950s a young person had freedom of imagination, and the nobility of this was spoken loud and clear by this building with its great high dome and its columns in front, the great ceiling and the grand windows. It was irreplaceable and it was historic, and it was taken down to make room for an ugly bank which was no less and no more ugly than 85,000 other banks across America.

The books were moved to this little squat brick warehouse a block away, a little building with casement windows—which was my town’s way of saying don’t get ideas, you’re no genius, you know that. You’re from here, so here’s your library. It was depressing.

St. Paul is a city that once had a very handsome bustling downtown jammed with traffic, streetcars, and department stores, which took a dive during the suburban exodus of the ’50s and ’60s, and then during the 1970s tried to make itself suburban and went through urban renewal in much the same way as the Allies applied urban renewal to the city of Dresden. There were whole blocks of grand old buildings that simply disappeared, and skyways were put in to try to make downtown as much like a suburban shopping mall as possible, and blocks that were once a series of little individual storefronts became this brutal concrete-and-steel wall that terrifies you after the sun goes down.

There were once blocks of little factories. There was a barrel factory and a pickle factory and machine shops. The doors opened. You could see men bent to their machines on a summer day. There were printing plants and a dairy and a millworks
I loved the downtown streets that barely exist anymore, with all of the little storefronts, all of the little shops, each one individual. Each shop had a proprietor who was there looking out at you hopefully through the big windows, and as you walked along the streets of downtown you could feel it.

You could feel the power of all of these individual entrepreneurial dreams—a scary thing, a scary thing that men and women who knew the Depression and had seen what could happen to little businesses. Nonetheless, they decided to go into hock and take the chance, open the shop, get the aunts to come and work for you, hire the nephews, get grandma to work, do whatever you found to do, sell Coney Island hot dogs, sell coffee or dry goods or men’s hats or luggage or religious books or whatever, and in the process of opening your shop to develop the kind of amiable good manners that encourage customers to come back, salesmanship, the earliest school of etiquette and culture.

My Uncle Lou Powell was the entrepreneur in our family and when I knew him he owned a candy company, Ada Claire Candies. It was a little company, had just three employees, all of them related to him, and they made sugar wafers and peanut brittle and he went around selling it to groceries and drugstores. My Uncle Lou had the sunniest disposition of anybody in our family. He was happy to chat up anybody, strangers or anybody, amiable with all who came his way. He was of no particular political persuasion that he would ever care to tell you about. He just liked people, period, and he sold a lot of candy and he caused a lot of tooth decay.

He was the storyteller in our family and I listened to him tell stories every Saturday night, usually the same ones over and over again—which is the true test of a storyteller, the ability to repeat yourself. And whatever I have done in this line of work was an attempt to carry on in the tradition of an old candy salesman.

I believe that when you degrade the city—when you flatten things and take out all of the color and the variety and you make it into a series of warehouses with windows—you depress the Uncle Louis of the world and you change our culture. I believe that he and others in our family were inspired by their surroundings though they didn’t mean to be. They were country people. They were not city people. They were used to canning their own vegetables and killing their own chickens, and they practiced a religious faith that was not mainstream, so they were suspicious of much that was in the city. They did not aspire to wealth or prominence of any kind, and yet in one generation they became proud of the city in which they lived because it had grandeur to it. It was something!

My father was a railway mail clerk and he came to work at the Union Depot. The grandeur of the Union Depot was not lost on my father. He loved to take us in to work through the front door and show us that great high ceiling. This beautiful building said that railroads were crucial to St. Paul and if you worked for them, even if you did menial work, your work had nobility and meaning.

The airport has none of that whatsoever. The airport is a shopping mall with some long hallways that lead you to portable hallways that lead you onto planes. The adventure of flight is nowhere to be sensed in the airport. You just have a lot of metal detectors and conveyor belts to put your shoes and your laptop computers on. There’s less room for grandeur in our day because the word “corporate” has come to mean homogenous and repressive and dull.

Our buildings are designed by people who don’t live here, for companies that are part of enormous conglomerates whose management could not care less what it feels like to walk around St. Paul. Then there’s the government, which is a whole separate problem, which used to go in for grandeur but now evidently has had enough of that and now gives us this series of Stalinist buildings that would not be out of place in East Berlin.

The Grandeur—and Eccentricity—of the City

Now, what hurt downtown St. Paul, of course, was the exodus to the suburbs, an inevitable thing. The suburban urge is not hard to understand, the desire for serenity and for privacy and a green, pleasant place populated by people pretty much like yourself—and not the sort of yahoos and weirdos and hot dogs that you might run into in the city and who might glom onto you and you might have a hard time shaking them off.

I love the old garden sub-
urbs of the cities, but suburban people need to come to town too and get into a crowd and see who else lives in this world other than middle-class people, and that is what downtown is for.

Grandeur is fabulous, but a city needs street life as well. It needs places where people go to eat lunch on the cheap and to ogle girls and to flirt with strangers and to drink and to dance, and places where you could go off and neck if you wanted to.

And most of all to be in a crowd of odd people and to get the hubbub and the action and the noise and the smells, and bump into people and enjoy accidental encounters, amazing conversations that you overhear parts of and then repeat for the rest of the day, where you can see all of the life of the city, the pathetic and the disturbing and the unbelievable.

Minneapolis does better at this than we do in St. Paul. You go down Hennepin Avenue on a weekend night and there are crowds of young people who want to get drunk and meet each other—young people who come to the center of town as people have been coming to the center of town since God was a child in order to meet mysterious other people. The internet chat room does not take the place of this, of the boulevard, of the town square, of the preening and the strutting and the parading and all of the courtship behavior of young people.

We have now outlawed smoking in bars. I am not sure that this is a good idea, though I am an ex-smoker of 20 years. I just wonder if we are going to outlaw profane speech next or speech that is demeaning or marginalizing, and then we might as well all move to Omaha.

What is life, what is the city if we are not allowed to be stupid and tasteless? There has to be a place to do that.

Rice Park is a beautiful place. An hour or an hour and a half in Rice Park is always a pleasure and an inspiration. I go there on a summer day and watch kids splash in the fountain. But it would be a livelier and a better place if they had not torn down the old bus depot nearby. Bus people bring something to a city. Most great American writers were bus riders at one time or the other, so when you move the buses off to the outskirts of downtown it means that the great St. Paul novel may not be written, or when it is, it won’t be about St. Paul any longer.

The Power of Public Life

We are preservationists. We are proud preservationists. We believe that beautiful places are easily destroyed and not easily replaced. We honor the craft and the vision and the exuberance of old structures. We believe that American cities are the soul of our country. Rural America is not so different from rural France or rural Germany, or the forests of Sweden, but Chicago and New York and Los Angeles and St. Paul and Milwaukee are uniquely American.

When I decided to open a bookstore a couple of years ago I did it because I had found, I thought, the perfect place to do it. It was the cellar of the old Angus Hotel of 1887 with limestone walls and skylights in the ceiling which look up to the sidewalk. Upstairs there’s a coffee house where students and young writers and other people, I have no idea who they are, sit and write at laptop computers or on legal pads, and they tap away and people flirt with each other and they look across the room at each other under these great, high 1887 windows.

It’s a beautiful place. I don’t care what goes inside old buildings. I’m all for rejiggering them to your heart’s content. I am all in favor of retro architecture. I do not grieve for the buildings we have lost. There simply is not time to grieve for them. I am 65 years old, after all.

Our country is beset with problems to which I have no answer whatsoever. I have no handle on things at all. We are in the midst of a dreadful war which shows no signs of resolving itself. We are in the midst of great economic uncertainty. People I know no longer have any clue as to what their house might be worth these days. This house that they live in which had been their great annuity, this was their gold mine, and now they’re not sure at all.

There has been an enor-
mous degradation in civil constitutional rights in our country. There is a miserable punitive attitude toward immigrants in our midst. Meanwhile, the polar ice cap is shrinking, we read the other day, by a million square miles, and who knows what will happen. Scientists who have been studying it for decades are bewildered by all this.

But no matter what happens I am in favor of public life and public grandeur and high spiritedness as a general tonic for the burdens of life and as a way of showing our young people, who are always prone to grumpiness and to morbid-ity, that we are, all of us, after all is said and done, we are Americans and we have this history of eagerness and optimism and amiability, hospitality, exuberance. You can see it in our history. The old courthouse across the street was not designed by despondent people. So lighten up. Lighten up.

The city, this great city, a place with so many stories, a place of mystery and intrigue, a place where we come to find something, including some things we have no word for, some things we weren’t planning on—so urban planning is problematic. It’s hard to plan mystery, but at least, at the very least, you and I can keep powerful fools from destroying the grandeur and the beauty that we already have. Don’t let them do it. Don’t let them do it. Thank you very much.

Garrison Keillor is the author of more than a dozen books, including Lake Wobegon Days, The Book of Guys, Love Me, and Homegrown Democrat. He is also the creator, host, and writer of A Prairie Home Companion and the Writer’s Almanac heard on public radio stations across the country.

Making the Preservation Message Resonate with Donors

Jay Steenhusen

I am really grateful to be here because I love the preservation movement and I’m one of the people who has benefited from all the hard work that you do. Some of the most wonderful times in my life were spent running around Mackinaw Island with my family and seeing those old buildings and being at Fort Mackinaw and hanging around my grandparents’ 100-year-plus old farm. This was before there was ever Antiques Roadshow, trying to find the treasures that my mother and my two aunts had not already put stickers on.

And when I think about preservation, when I think about being at Mackinaw Island and other historic sites, I get a really warm feeling inside. It’s comforting to be there. It’s a place that really delivers the experience of consistency.

So I’m going to start from a personal standpoint, with the feelings I have about preservation. What would I do if I were in your shoes and had to raise funds for preservation? What if I had to communicate the way I feel about historic sites? What would I need to know to make it possible?

Engage the Emotions

First of all keep in mind that all fundraising is emotional. All the quantitative analysis, all the designs, all the projections, all the endowment, all the tax planning is secondary.

People make large charitable gifts for emotional reasons and we need to be prepared to appeal to our donors on an emotional basis. It’s not the structure, it’s the story. People will be persuaded as their emotions get caught up in the experience.

Think about all the other causes that you compete with. Where do you feel like you’re missing out? Well, that cancer story is so emotional. That poor child overseas is emotional. How do we compete with that? There is a solution, and we’ll get there.
Identify the Donor’s Motivations

Let’s look at the fundraising experience you create for your donors. Our donors are not going to be solely persuaded by facts. It’s going to be their experience of our sites, the experience of their philanthropy that is going to persuade them to make these gifts. I have sat with individuals who would never betray their emotions anywhere else but in their philanthropy. People find that giving gives them permission to feel. We need to find ways to connect the emotions of our sites to our donor prospects, because the more they feel the more they’re going to give.

Some of the biggest motivations for giving are unspoken. We tend to look at our sites and then look at the outcome of what we’re providing, and think that’s motivational for the donor. I’m persuaded, having worked with many high-net-worth individuals, that there are at least seven unspoken motivations when it comes to philanthropy.

1. The first is the obvious. People are motivated by charitable intent. They see a purpose that they’re passionate about and they want to give to it. And those are the people that we immediately can connect with and find ourselves able to communicate clearly about the preservation ethic, because they share that with us.

2. The next motivation is legacy. Sometimes when people make a charitable gift it’s not about you but it’s about their personal legacy, and it takes two forms. One, the internal one: their desire to make a gift that makes them feel they’ve made a difference in the world and that touches their desire for significance. The other is more external: They’re looking for that more public legacy and they want to make that gift to declare to others that they’ve made a difference in the world.

3. Another one is family. People make charitable gifts because of their family. There are a number of donors who would give to your organization and give to your site if we could find a way to bring their children and grandchildren into the process. We need to show how they can connect with your preservation site, your mission, to further extend their set of values.

4. Another motivation is values. Values-driven donors want to see a specific set of beliefs or a specific set of values perpetuated in society. Think about how they can connect with your preservation site, your mission, to further extend their set of values.

5. Next are stakeholders. Those are donors who want to cause change and are interested in creating leverage and knowing that they’ve made a difference in society.

6. Another motivation is experts. When I shared these ideas at the National Trust board meeting in Albuquerque I had one board member say, “Exactly. My connection with the National Trust is because it’s a group that helps me become smarter about the preservation issues I’m passionate about.”

So we need to think about our donors in the context of those unspoken expectations to reach that broader audience.

Consider Age Differences

And finally, giving can be age-driven. People have participated in philanthropy over the decades and we’ve traditionally approached donors regardless of their age the same way. That is starting to change significantly. Donors who are in their 70s and older grew up in an era when making charitable gifts was an obligation; giving back to society was something that they needed to do. Our message for those in that senior age group should be one of helping them fulfill that obligation.

For the population aged between 65 and 75, it’s really about significance and the culture. The time that they lived through has caused them to want to know that they’ve done something significant, so you need to tie your site and your organization to their personal sense of significance. And then lastly the baby boomers are always concerned about culture.

So considering the unspoken motivations and the age needs of donors, we need to ask, What’s the opportunity out there?
First of all, our message about preservation needs to be future oriented. Second, it has to address a big idea. And third, it must be hopeful.

**Prepare to Tap a Golden Age of Philanthropy**

We’re entering a golden age of philanthropy, and I know people think we’ve been in it for quite some time, but we’re actually coming into an age when there will be more giving than has been done at any time in history. And that giving is going to be driven primarily by wealthy donors. Major gifts are going to be important, because we have shrinking capacity within the middle class, and more and more we’re going to have to rely on those significant gifts from major donors to keep our organizations going.

And the other key market for philanthropy in this period of time is going to be bequests. We’re going to see a large transfer of wealth from one generation to the next in the next several decades, and being able to tap into that is going to be critical to bridge the financing that organizations need.

**Communicate a Positive, Compelling Message**

So with those donors and that opportunity in mind, what do we need to do to capture more donors and get them involved in the preservation movement? There are three important messages that we need to think about when we’re crafting our communication to donors. First of all, our message about preservation needs to be future oriented. Second, it has to address a big idea. And third, it must be hopeful.

So given that, what’s a preservationist to do? I’m convinced that preservation is not about the past. I am convinced that preservation is about the future. Preservation is about looking forward and capturing what has happened in the past for the sake of future generations. If history were about the past, it would only have to be written once. History is rewritten with every generation because it’s adapted and communicates to that culture important themes and messages.

The preservation movement is about securing the sites that are vessels of communication, vessels of hope to the future. We no longer should look at what we’re preserving as capturing this in the past, but it’s about looking forward for future generations and preserving the story that a place tells and the values that it communicates.

Why is that important? First of all, it addresses the objection that we’re all about the past. We’re not. We’re about the future, and how we’re about the future is that we create the opportunity to take great examples of our society, and that experience of something important in our culture, and preserve that as a message and give it as a resource to future generations.

The really big concern among major donors right now is where our culture is heading. There’s this pervasive sense that our culture needs positive messages; it needs to regain its sense of community; it needs to regain this place for a conversation where we can come back together in community.

This also addresses the misperception that preservation is not urgent. Preservation is very urgent because our culture is deeply in need of positive messages about culture.

We’re about capturing those stories and carrying them forward into future generations. Each site captures that story and works together in this great mosaic of collected sites to tell a broad story about our culture and the positive messages, the positive experiences, of community that we have had together. With these, the next generation will have these resources to work with together to find its own message of culture.

And lastly, it addresses the issue of hope. Preservation is about hope for the future in that we are collecting these stories, we are collecting these experiences at these sites and putting them together to create resources for future generations to talk about, to have a conversation about culture, to be able to experience community together, and to engage each other to discover and develop the future generations’ culture.

I am really excited about the preservation movement. I think it’s extremely important because it provides a necessary resource for the next generation. I think we have a great opportunity to communicate with our significant funders as long as we share with them that our preservation work is a message about the future, it’s a story for community and a basis for conversation, and it’s an example that gives hope to the future and to future generations.

So I’m persuaded that—if we are able to 1) work with our donors and discover their expectations, 2) be age appropriate in our messaging to our donors, and 3) craft our message around the big idea that by preserving culture we are providing a hope for the future—then we’ll make it possible that one day the preservation movement will actually be overfunded. And that would be a good thing.
Valuing Heritage: Re-examining Our Foundations

Brenda Barrett

There is growing recognition that the heritage of this nation provides an important part of our sense of self, our community, and our identity as a people. Along with this growing appreciation, there are expanding notions of what makes up our individual and collective heritage and new ideas on how to value the contributions that heritage makes to our nation. These changing perspectives are discussed in the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s recently issued Findings and Recommendations of the Preserve America Summit (August 2007), based on the meeting held in New Orleans last October. The summit gathered a wide spectrum of the cultural community including representatives from the arts and humanities and from the many federal agencies that contribute to the federal historic preservation program, as well as a special Youth Summit, which added some needed perspective to the “usual” cast of practitioners.

All this is good news for the cultural heritage movement and specifically for historic preservation. However, the expanding scope of the movement also challenges our understanding of what is included as part of our heritage, and more critically, how we define what is significant. The question of definition is of particular importance as it has implications for what is officially recognized, what projects may receive assistance, and in some cases what will be preserved as our legacy for the future. This issue was thrown into stark relief by the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina on the historic properties and rich culture of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans in particular.

National Preservation Conference Session

To broaden the discussion on defining and valuing the role of heritage resources in our nation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation brought together a panel of academics and conference participants at the 2007 National Preservation Conference in St. Paul.

Starting the discussion on valuing historic places, Randy Mason summarized his work by noting the many ways a resource can be valued. While the economic value of a historic property is often the default position for the general public or property owners, the historic value is often the focus of those involved in historic preservation. This does not take into account other perspectives that may include the cultural, environmental, or social values of a place. Advocates for preservation can benefit from understanding this multivalent approach to the value of place.

Traditionally historic preservationists have looked at a historic resource as having a specifically defined significance, as for example Mount Vernon’s association with George Washington in his role as a founder of the nation. This limited view sometimes casts the success of the preservation approach as a contest in which one party wins and others lose. Mason asked the audience to think about endangered places that they care about, to identify the many values that might be associated with them, and to craft a solution to protect them that includes the interests of multiple partners. Noting that the National Trust had done an admirable job of engaging other partners in the preservation dialogue, he challenged the field to continue to share some fresh ideas on the principles on which historic preservation should be founded. In a standing-room-only session, the speakers Dr. Randy Mason from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Daniel Laven from the National Park Service’s Conservation Study Institute, and Dr. Carroll Van West from Middle Tennessee State University synthesized their findings and research on new directions in the field and heard powerful stories and ideas for new approaches from the attendees.

By working to protect a whole cultural landscape, not just selected buildings, and by exploring the distinctive history and culture of an under-reported people (African Americans on the southern East Coast who preserve traditions from West Africa), the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor illustrates new trends in preservation thinking.

Photo courtesy of the National Park Service, National Heritage Areas.
Coming from the disciplines of natural resources and conservation practice, Daniel Laven of the National Park Service reported on his recent research evaluating National Heritage Areas. He observed that effective heritage conservation and preservation requires thinking on a larger scale than is the usual practice. Operating on a landscape or regional scale then means having to work in partnership, since successful, long-term heritage preservation and stewardship exceeds the capacity of anyone actor or organization. This partnership approach sparks innovation by bringing together multiple perspectives and leads to new solutions. He noted that one of the keys to successful heritage area initiatives is the formation of partnership networks. These networks give strength, resiliency, and opportunities for innovation.

Most importantly, his research shows that telling the story of a region is the most essential step in engaging partners and communities. In all three of the areas he studied, storytelling was critical in building a sense of community and pride and in linking people across boundaries and generations. As a resident in the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor said:

“It’s telling the stories. Today, it’s the same situation as last century. You keep getting different waves of immigrant groups coming in. But guess what? Although they’re doing different jobs, they’re all probably in the same mills facing the same experiences and facing the same prejudices as previous immigrants. It’s a very common experience and we find that when we delve into the different traditions, there’s such a huge commonality when you get these groups together. I really think it serves to break down some of the natural barriers that people set up. So getting that story out there but not trying to sugarcoat it is important. There’s a lot of bad stuff. But you know what? It’s what we are, and it deserves to be told. That’s what this really is about.”

Laven concluded that to be empowering, the storytelling has to acknowledge the whole story and be intellectually honest. It has to engage people and communities thematically and not be constrained by political boundaries. If done in the right ways, the story of a region can develop a network of heritage-based partnerships similar to an ecosystem approach and build an area’s heritage capital. It sets up a climate that encourages and amplifies new ideas.

The Preserve America Summit in New Orleans provided a venue to begin the re-examination of our foundations. Carroll Van West recalled his early training at Colonial Williamsburg with its emphasis at that time on an aesthetic vision for historic preservation. The inability to change direction and to see the complexity of the stories of our past still perplexes and holds back some elements of the history and historic preservation fields.

However, he expressed his optimism that this is changing, noting how the National Register of Historic Places, the most widely recognized framework for evaluating the significance of heritage resources, has over time shown an ability to adapt to new scholarly questions. These include reconsidering what are the significant patterns in our history as well as including more voices, working closer to the ground, to explore what is historically significant, particularly at the local and state levels. New scholarship enhances our ability to consider resources that are less than 50 years old and to address challenging and controversial topics. Definitions of significance can incorporate rural regions, cultural landscapes, and resources of under-reported groups.

West emphasized the value of making history part of our national dialogue as well as part of our everyday life. By being committed to the truth and by asking for input from the people who live in the community, preservation will become more relevant and make a difference. He called on preservation practitioners to develop reciprocal partnerships to move these issues into the mainstream and make the past matter.

The attendees built on the panelists’ remarks, challenging the preservation community to make heritage part of sustainable development for communities, for example in the newly designated Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor, and to tell the painful tales of human exploitation such as the Tuskegee Syphilis experiments. The importance of telling the whole story struck a chord with many, who told their own special stories. Others talked about recognizing the landscapes of work
and wanted to look at our country’s heritage resources through a wider lens. They expressed hope that this dialogue begun in the session would continue, as the preservation community faces what may be its most critical questions over the next decade. What are the values we are working so hard to preserve? How do we define them? And who is the “we” that is doing the defining?

A Broader Perspective

In nine years our most seminal legislative charge, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Anniversaries are always a time for reflection and renewal and there are signs that reveal, on the ground and in conferences such as the Preserve America Summit, a much larger and more expansive definition of heritage values than are found under the current rubric of historic preservation. An expanded definition is emerging that encompasses the natural and cultural as well as the historic values of the landscape, recognizes living communities and diverse traditions, uses heritage values, broadly writ, for the management of resources, and is more centered on people and sense of place than on the features of the built environment. One of many outgrowths of the broader view of heritage is the importance of narrative—“the story”—in describing and connecting people to their (and other people’s) heritage. These are the discussions that need to go forward to prepare the way for the next 50 years.

Brenda Barrett is the director of recreation and conservation for the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources.

NOTES


Root Shock and the Gulf

Mindy Thompson Fullilove

I am a social psychiatrist. This field of psychiatry is interested in understanding the ways in which the organization of society affects mental health and mental illness. My own work focuses on cities. I got to this work by a somewhat circuitous route, beginning in 1986 with studies of the AIDS epidemic. Although the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS, actually travels from one person to another, its voyage is determined by social policies that affect where and how people live and how prevention and treatment are managed in those places. I would like to bring my reflections on the AIDS epidemic to bear on the recovery of the Gulf Coast after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The spread of AIDS in the United States, as it turns out, is closely tied to displacement. Among gay men, this displacement was from home-towns all over America to the gay ghettos in major cities that offered both relief from homophobia and freedom of self-expression. Among African Americans and Hispanics the crucial displacement was related to the destruction of ghetto neighborhoods as a result of federal, state, and local policies.

The spread of AIDS is also affected by secondary policies of neglect, which are themselves tied to the forces that created displacement. Gay men and people of color—especially if poor—are easily shunted aside and marginalized in U.S. society. Unfortunately, public health interventions are distributed by wealth and power, not need, so the neediest people are the least likely to get the disease prevention help they require. Three case studies of organizational response to AIDS helped me understand this in more detail. Organizations were slow to respond to the epidemic, and interventions were often disorganized and always underfunded. Stigma directed at gay men and drug users interfered with the delivery of health care, prevention information, and prevention...
Mr. Jenkins lived in a “wired” neighborhood that took care of him in many ways. The loss of that neighborhood was devastating. Listening to him describe the uprooting and dispersal of his neighborhoods and his terrible, lingering sorrow about the loss of his home, I came to think of this kind of violent uprooting as causing “root shock”—the traumatic stress reaction to the loss of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem.

I learned that upheaval can be repaired. But, as with the AIDS epidemic, the policies and social processes that led to destruction of a neighborhood are not likely to support its repair afterwards.

“Recovery” in the Gulf

The parallels between the AIDS epidemic and urban renewal are these: Marginalized people were most vulnerable; they were blamed for causing the troubles; and help was inadequate and disorganized, adding insult to injury. We can identify this process in the post-hurricane disaster response in the Gulf. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the flooding of New Orleans, caused massive damage to an enormous area. In the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe, disaster relief was slow, inadequate, and disorganized. But what emerged immediately was a counter-proposal to full emergency intervention. What emerged was the idea that the poor would make better “progress” if they never went back home. They could be “mixed in” in cities like ...
Houston and Atlanta, their children could go to better schools, and the adults could benefit from being near wealthier people. In the meantime, the land they had vacated would be redeveloped for the benefit of wealthier people.

This false “win-win” effectively stopped the recovery from the emergency and set in motion a displacement scenario that is still playing out. By the August 2007 second anniversary, the outlines of recovery were quite clear. The French Quarter was doing well, wealthier neighborhoods were working, and landlords were benefiting from major increases in rent. Meanwhile, poor and working people were stranded in other cities or trailer camps or, if they had managed to get home, were suffering because schools had been slow to reopen, few bus lines were running, and rents had gone through the roof. Though media continue to talk about the “progress” being made in the Gulf, the real progress stopped when the real estate scam started.

**Preservation Can Promote a Better Way**

Preservationists can point to a just and beautiful alternative, the Manchester neighborhood in Pittsburgh. Arthur Ziegler and James D. Van Trump, co-founders of Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, began their work in historic preservation in 1964. While working through the historic Manchester neighborhood, they realized that a beautiful and historic community was threatened with destruction. They worked with community residents to preserve the neighborhood, first defeating the city plans to demolish the area and then developing tools for invigorating the neighborhood without displacement.

The tools that they developed were quite remarkable. One of the most important is that Ziegler and Van Trump have always worked in partnership with the Manchester neighborhood. Many community groups are engaged in the work. The local people are part of what is happening there. It makes Manchester feel like a safe and welcoming home for those who settle there.

A second important tool is the inventory of neighborhood structures, which resulted in a series of maps that documented everything in the neighborhood. These maps are not hidden in a vault. They are living documents, used by community leaders in their every day of restoring the neighborhood. I vividly remember the maps from a 1998 visit. What struck me then was that the maps created a shared understanding of the neighborhood and gave transparency to the redevelopment efforts.

A third element is that they were able to develop a revolving loan fund which helps to provide money for building and renovating. This fund was started in 1966 with $100,000 from the Sarah Scaife Foundation. Manchester has benefited from the fund, as have other neighborhoods. Other the years the fund has grown. Now it is a major funding source, providing loans to more than 30 Pittsburgh neighborhood organizations.

On its website, Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation describes its achievement as demonstrating that “grassroots, nonprofit historic preservation … can be a catalyst for urban renewal” (www.phlf.org/global/mission.html). I would say that its work demonstrates that honesty is the best policy. Rather than using doublespeak to displace and impoverish the poor, PHLF has used participation, transparency, and commitment to create new vitality in abandoned urban areas. A brief glimpse of this powerful work can be obtained on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=V12mJ57KGOM).

Arthur Ziegler and James Van Trump demonstrate the kind of savvy that preservationists bring to American cities. I have noticed that preservationists tend to appreciate place. They understand what a historic site adds to the workings of the modern world.

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**Figure 2: “Good Things” make a place work: David Jenkins’ map of his boyhood home in southeast Philadelphia.**

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**I have noticed that preservationists tend to appreciate place. They understand what a historic site adds to the workings of the modern world.**
Preservationists have skills in working for stabilization of place, rather than its destruction. They understand how to reach the general public and they are willing to stick to the task until it is done. Most American cities are in desperate need of such leadership. As was the case in Pittsburgh, enlightened leadership from preservationists can have a major effect on the substance of urban life.

Acknowledging and Addressing Root Shock

Root shock, like other kinds of traumatic stress, is a very painful experience. The pain is not resolved in a day or a week. In fact, it can endure for decades. Once a neighborhood has been destroyed—its wires cut and residents dispersed—the synergies of that settlement are lost to all of us forever. The shock reverberates far beyond the local area to touch caring people everywhere. It is not a coincidence that many preservation organizations came into being in the aftermath of the massive urban renewal projects of the 1950s. Reasonable people saw the destruction and decided to stop it.

At the same time, my observations suggest that most of the injury gets swept under the rug, hidden out of sight, and covered over as “progress.” The residents pushed out of the way are stranded—like the poor from New Orleans who are suffering in trailer parks. At that moment, recovery stops, as it did when land speculation trumped rescue in the Gulf. A society that sits in limbo, pushing the vulnerable out of the way and then leaving them in pain, is a society that has created a substantial weakness in its internal connections.

This affects all organizations, whether they are bowling leagues or preservation societies, because all organizations are forced to work from incorrect assumptions about the nature of our problems and the possible solutions. Misinformation poses enormous hazards.

In light of that, I recommend a task be added to the work of preservation societies, and that is the preservation of the whole story and the big picture. This implies learning to look at landscapes in a new way. The wanton destruction of historic neighborhoods has cleared out what was there and it has created new uses of other spaces. The new set of concerns should be about both the injured “here” and the displaced “there.” Furthermore, it should be understood that, without a resolution of both “here” and “there,” no recovery is possible.

Many may think this is an extreme statement. After all, if the French Quarter is functioning, isn’t that some progress in the Gulf? I am arguing that the apparent recovery signified by the reopened hotels and restaurants in the French Quarter is an illusion. The history and culture of the city remains in diaspora. That it will be irreparably lost seems highly likely, given the deep commitment of many levels of government to a vision of “progress” that simply tries to eliminate the poor. If preservation of the Gulf is an important task, then it must confront the complex reality that the Gulf is spread all over America. Visionaries, like Ziegler and Van Trump, can find solutions even to problems as complex as this. Let us give them our utmost support.

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NOTES
The Taste of Place

Arlin Wasserman

I want to thank you for welcoming a foodie to close a conference about historic preservation. While all that has gone on this past week has focused on our senses of sight and sometimes hearing, we close with a focus on taste. It’s an interesting choice and one that makes me wonder why I am here to close the conference. So let us start with some of what we’ve considered over the last several days.

What qualities make up the identity of a place? What is it that tells our senses that it is unique? What signals tell us the quality of a place, its authenticity, and its meaning? We can look at the architecture and how the buildings facilitate the life of the community. We can look at how a community’s streets and structures sit on the landscape, and take in the views from porches, street corners, and tall buildings.

We look for signals about its history. As a Philadelphia native and now Washington, D.C., resident, I know that sometimes a single building or a town square is iconic and brings to mind the great moments that built or challenged our country or that commemorate the contribution of a single person or a historic movement. The signals can be subtler. When I lived in rural Michigan, the remnants of barns and farmhouses in the midst of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park told stories both anonymous and meaningful of settlers who came west and settled near the lakes to clear and farm the land until the soil gave out and the snows grew too deep.

In Alabama, the vision of outsider artists working in Gee’s Bend with paint, fabric, metal, and the discarded remnants of society have redefined an area once shaped by the legacy of slavery, segregation, and poverty.

We see, we listen, we remember, and we understand the sense of place.

But what about taste? Can that most magical of senses also help us understand the meaning and uniqueness of a place? Does flavor capture meaning?

Simply put, yes. Food persistently expresses the place where it is grown. Soil, climate, sun, and slope all affect taste. Arugula, lettuce, and bok choy taste different in Cuba and in Vancouver, as a first-hand tasting of the products of two farms showed.

When we taste a unique flavor, it triggers memories as surely as when we see a famous building or hear a popular song. We think of the first time and the last time we tasted something similar, of when we visited a winery or milked a cow or went into a bakery, or the friend or parent who cooked food for us when we were young, or the sense of the sea and spray as we slurp down an oyster.

“Terroir,” or Regional Flavor

The ability of a place to shape the flavor of food at levels that are deeper and more subtle than simply choosing species and variety is called “terroir” in French, roughly translating to “a taste of place” in English. Terroir denotes the special characteristics that geography bestows upon food. It embodies the sum of the effects that the local environment has had on the manufacture of the product. To soil scientists and agronomists working in land grant universities across the country, it is the influence of soil chemistry and microclimate on crop or livestock composition and flavor.

While terroir expresses the flavor, the word also describes a group of foods from the same region and sharing the same type of soil, weather conditions, variety, and production savoir-faire, which contribute to give its specific flavor profile. Some might argue that it also includes history, tradition, the continuous ownership of a farm through generations, and other considerations.

As proponents of historic preservation, we also understand the meaning of marketing. In that spirit, I would offer a more poetic sense of terroir:

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palate of flavors. In the Emilia Romagna region of Italy, where Parma is located, you can offer a delicious meal that brings together parmesan cheese, parma ham, and a bottle of Lambrusco made from the region’s grapes.

It’s a bit like Garanimals\(^1\), the children’s clothing of my youth, where you are sure to assemble a good-looking outfit by matching the labels on the sleeves and waists of your clothing. Make sure the clothes you’re wearing all have orange lions or blue monkeys and you’re sure to please.

“Geographically Identified Foods,” “Local Foods,” and Brands

In the European Union, the tags on foods are ones of geographic identity. Some of Europe’s best-known geographically identified foods include France’s champagne, a sparkling wine made from grapes grown in the eponymous region; Italy’s parmesan cheese and parma ham; and Greece’s feta cheese and kalamata olives, along with another recipe for olives flavored with kritamo, a wild fennel growing along the shores of Crete.

To receive the European Union’s special designation as geographically identified, foods must stand on three pillars: location, genetic authenticity, and artisan production methods. Bringing this into the kitchen and then to the table, we can look at the three qualities that make up authentic pizza: the use of tomatoes grown in the soils of the San Marzano region, mozzarella made from the milk of traditionally bred water buffalos, and the artisan method of cooking in a wood-fired oven until blackened blisters appear on the crust.

One thing you can hear on the other side of the Atlantic is that Guinness doesn’t travel well, meaning that when the beer travels from Ireland to the United States, something is lost in the flavor and during the voyage. Geographically identified foods also don’t “travel” well.

In the United States, there’s a host of forces that work against a sense of geographic identity. There are laws around commercial speech and who owns the names of places. Branding takes up some of the mental space that Europeans associate with place. There’s a bias against preserving geographic identity because foods in the U.S. are grown using trans-genomic technology, which other countries don’t permit, and because of the challenges of preserving the pedigree of a food item as it moves through many hands in a global supply chain. Put simply, if one is not careful, in the U.S. corporations can effectively own the “name” of a place and prevent producers from that area from gaining the value inherent in their location.

In other words, in the European Union, we know that parmesan cheese was made in Parma, Italy, from milk produced in that region, while in the U.S., we know that Philadelphia Cream Cheese, named after my hometown, was made by Kraft.

That all said, U.S. consumers are in favor of country-of-origin labeling, or knowing the nation that produced each item of food. More than 80 percent of Americans want such labeling to be mandatory, and are more likely to buy food grown in the U.S. and pay a premium price for it (National Farmers’ Union Survey, January 19, 2004). Official policy, fueled by concerns about the safety of Chinese imports, now is following opinion, although earlier the current administration opposed origin labeling when the U.S. experienced its first cases of mad cow disease.

From the European perspective, geographically identified foods are more than just about country-of-origin labeling. The Union proposed that 43 foods be initially protected under world trade accords, with a method for other countries to petition for more. Italy also has about 300 more foods poised for designation while Asian countries about 500 additional.

Preserving this information is a challenge in the complex U.S. food supply chain, one that stretches to Latin America, China, across 50 states. One response to the lack of identity has been the U.S. “Local Foods” movement. Its strongest proponents
products are everywhere. A brand is the mark of the maker and an indicator of quality and consistency. The first branded food products were invented in the 12th century in Schabziger, Switzerland. There, a cheese maker created Sap Sago®, a hard grating cheese formed into small cones. Branding became more popular with industrialized standard production. For those concerned with animal welfare, we should note that live-stock branding is unrelated, its origin based on the other meaning of “brand” to describe a hot stick.

By creating a branded product, you convey a host of meanings: quality, safety, and trustworthiness. If done well, brands can provide a sense of authenticity along with tradition, and cultural and individual identity. You can give consumers a place in the world and an emotional connection with brands such as Harley Davidson and Starbucks. These are many of the things that community and place can also mean, and this is the core of the challenge before us.

**Toward an American “Taste of Place”**

Within our branded market-place, how can we create an American “Taste of Place”? The first step is to identify and cultivate diverse producers, artisans, and crops that all evoke unique local taste. In each region, it will take a commitment to local flavor and exceptional quality. This must come along with a willingness to embrace the miracle of the 24/7 supermarket model, recognizing that almost every family relies on the modern grocery store for food and that asking people to go out of their way and make additional trips to farms and farmers’ markets will interest a relatively few households. We must also recognize that in countries where this works, private and public programs work together to protect the “taste of place.”

In the end, the food must be appealing, both good tasting and also offering a proposition that consumers can understand and appreciate. This includes a unique flavor, offering a premium experience at a premium price, and recognizing that most consumers blend both local and locale—or an authentic sense of place—in their minds. Again focusing on the consumers and their sense of personal satisfaction, it’s about building interest in food itself, and not farming practices.

For the well-being of farmers and agricultural communities, the premium price may be the most interesting item in that list. So here taste is a way to increase differentiation of products and create new price points and experiences. Like the best of brands, place is an attribute that is unique and intrinsic, and one that allows consumers to infer meaning and express their identity.

As this conference ends here in Minnesota, we are very aware that winter is just around the corner. That was the inspiration for Hemmingford in Quebec’s Napierville Valley, previously known as “The Wastelands.” The community of 1,703 now proclaims the slogan “Country Flavors and Historic Roots.” It’s where Breton traditions meet the Northwoods through the artisan production of iced cider. This is a beverage that blends the tradition of hard cider production carried by its French immigrant population to its bounty of apple orchards. The province has worked with growers to cultivate a new artisan food industry. To be a part of it, growers must adhere to specific iced cider definition and standards.

Iced cider is a beverage produced through the alco-
The value we truly gain from this taste of place is one of preservation of rural working landscapes, culinary traditions, and agricultural communities.

Arlin Wasserman is the founder of Changing Tastes, a consultancy that provides brand strategy and management consulting to food companies and community organizations that market sustainable and artisan food products. He is a recipient of a Food and Society Policy Fellowship, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, through which he explored food marketing practices across the world that emphasize place. He is the vice president of corporate citizenship of Sodexo, a Paris-based hospitality company whose 340,000 employees help make it the world’s leading food service provider.