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Winter 2002 • Volume 16 • No. 2

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Cover photos (left to right):
First Baptist Meeting House, Providence, R.I. (Photo by Bob DiCaprio, Inc.)
Fort McHenry, Baltimore, Md. (Photo by Byrd Wood)
Carpenters’ Hall, Philadelphia, Pa. (Photo by Nick Kelsh)
At the 1999 National Preservation Conference in Washington, D.C., John H. Chafee, senator from Rhode Island, spoke eloquently about the spirit of place and the importance of finding ways to preserve it. Those remarks, in what proved to be Chafee’s last major public address before his death, inspired the theme of the 2001 Providence conference, which was dedicated to him and held in his home state. Senator Chafee’s eldest son, Zechariah Chafee, spoke at the opening plenary session in Providence about his father’s long-standing commitment to historic preservation.

Greetings, preservers of our past, benefactors of our future. Welcome to Providence, and welcome to Rhode Island, once John Chafee’s home. For years you and he worked together to, as you put it, “protect the irreplaceable.” During John Chafee’s six years as governor and his 23 years in the Senate, the cause of historic preservation had a high-level government advocate of imagination and vigor. How fitting that the National Preservation Conference should be dedicated to his memory. His family is moved by the honor and thanks you for it.

For our well-being as a nation, he saw the necessity of saving buildings of historical standing and of architectural merit. As he said, “Naysayers may ask: What difference does saving one train station or post office make to the future of America? My response is this: Preservation is not just about conserving brick and mortar, lintel and beam. It is about the quality of life and the possibility of a bright future.” Organizations such as the National Trust have succeeded in raising the national consciousness regarding the importance of rescuing those special gems.

But it was also in the broader social policy implications of historic preservation that John Chafee saw fruitful possibilities. In the large-scale salvation of older houses in aging cities he saw a way of attracting families to live in town rather than adding to our mushrooming suburbs. He
understood that the cost of tax breaks for the repair of old houses would be a savings, given the costs of new roads, schools, and sewers in new suburbs. He knew it would bring vitality to our shrinking cities, and thus, of such importance to him, it would save from further development the fields and forests of our dwindling countryside.

To this end, he pushed right up until his death in 1999 for the Historic Homeownership Act. This act would give to homeowners who rehabilitate homes in historic areas a tax credit of 20 percent of the project’s value. This sum could be used to defray taxes or to obtain a mortgage credit. The act would attract middle-and low-income as well as high-income homeowners to the repair and ownership of houses in historic neighborhoods.

John Chafee also ensured that the massive transportation bill he shepherded to passage in 1998 contained money for the restoration of historic buildings.

As I am sure you recognize, in politics there are many who flock to drink the wine of success. Far fewer are those who have toiled in the vineyard. John Chafee toiled to the very end.

Zechariah Chafee is an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Providence, R.I.
I’m pleased to welcome representatives from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to our city for this exciting 2001 National Preservation Conference.

The stated mission of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by Congress in 1949, is to “protect the irreplaceable, to fight to save historic buildings and the neighborhoods and landscapes they anchor.” This mission is enthusiastically embraced in the city of Providence. The valuable assistance the National Trust gives to local communities is a powerful incentive for all of us to do as much as possible to preserve our priceless heritage.

What started Providence on the road to revitalization was the dedication and tireless work of preservationists, beginning as far back as 1937—with such stellar figures as Antoinette Downing—and intensifying in the 1950s. These efforts continue to this day in the work of the Providence Preservation Society, the Historic District Commission, and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

Preservation efforts have made Providence the success it is today, and have been the catalyst for the new and exciting construction that visitors and residents enjoy. Providence would not look the way it does today but for the devotion of groups like the Providence Preservation Society, Benefit Street, the Shepard Building, the Providence Performing Arts Center, the Providence Biltmore, the Lederer Theater, the Smith Building, the Nightingale-Brown House—the list of our successes is long. All of this is a testament to the tenacity and ceaseless efforts of preservationists and the city of Providence, working in tandem to preserve our priceless heritage for succeeding generations.

In Providence, we view preservation as essential to our future, a strong economic tool that will spur new development in the coming years.
The Providence Preservation Society, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, and great community groups like the Elmwood Foundation, the West Broadway Neighborhood Association, and the College Hill Neighborhood Association, have been saving historic structures and sites, and revitalizing our communities.

Much has been accomplished. The Providence Preservation Society’s Revolving Fund has brought about the restoration of nearly 150 properties totaling $2.7 million, and has participated in over $7.4 million in affordable housing development in the Armory District, Elmwood, and the East Side.

In our city we are proud that, for 44 years, the Providence Preservation Society has been in the forefront of the fight to save and restore historic structures and sites in Providence. The Society has helped reveal, through publications, presentations, walking tours, and special events, that we in Providence have an array of historic architecture of the most astonishing variety and beauty imaginable. We have the largest district of Federal and colonial architecture in the nation. This fact is not lost on the producers of the television series Providence.

Providence is grateful to the National Trust for the various initiatives that assist us in our local preservation efforts. We are appreciative of your efforts in holding a three-day retreat in the spring of 1998 for representatives of historic preservation organizations, which included the Providence Preservation Society and the Preservation Society of Pawtucket. We also applaud your valuable assistance to Preserve Rhode Island, which helps our larger community identify the challenges and needs facing our respective preservation agencies.

We thank you for your support.
financial assistance to the Rhode Island Historical Society for publication of *The Outdoor Sculpture of Rhode Island*. Providence has become a leader in presenting site-specific outdoor sculpture and in generating fantastic festivals like the Convergence Festival, which attracts sculptors and other artists from around the world, enlivening our capital city.

Without due diligence, it is entirely possible for a community and a nation to “lose its memory,” to allow the leveling of countless historic structures, literally burying the past and bringing about a collective amnesia regarding heritage. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a champion in the struggle to preserve our past for future generations, and to build upon our architectural heritage to create vibrant, revitalized cities for the 21st century.

To all of you who are working so hard to make this conference the huge success that it is, thank you. You will find Providence a perfect city in which to explore, in depth, the many interesting topics discussed at the conference. A walk by our restored riverbanks and along our historic streets will confirm for you the supreme value of the work you do, year in and year out.

Without historic preservation, without the vision of pioneers and the hard work of countless individuals who have devoted themselves to our renaissance, Providence’s revitalization would not have been possible. As we continue to embrace our past, the future indeed looks bright for Providence, due in large measure to continuing preservation efforts.

With my thanks to National Trust President Richard Moe, Chairman Bill Hart, and all the wonderful people at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, I wish you continued success at this outstanding conference, and I hope you enjoy your stay in the renaissance city of Providence.

Vincent A. (Buddy) Cianci, Jr., is mayor of Providence, R.I., and a strong supporter of the city’s preservation efforts.
I’m very glad you’re all here.

We’ve spoken and heard those words often in recent weeks, as we’ve sought comfort and reassurance in the presence of family, friends, and colleagues. It’s a sentiment that’s totally appropriate here, because we are a family. That is really why I’m so glad you’re here, so grateful that we can gather together, can strengthen and support each another as we try to make sense out of what has happened and try to figure out where we fit in the new world into which we’ve been thrust.

We’ve heard it said over and over: “Things will never be the same again.” Thousands of lives have been changed forever. The skyline of our biggest city has been changed. It’s probably no exaggeration to say that the very shape of our future has changed too—in some ways that we can already see and in others that aren’t yet clear and we cannot yet see.

But some things remain intact—and maybe even stronger than before: our appreciation of the traditions and values that have shaped our country and that still shape our lives; the bravery, compassion, and generosity that we demonstrate when our fellow citizens are in need; the sense of common purpose that unites us.

So much has changed since the morning of September 11—but one thing, above all, remains true and constant: The American spirit endures.

September 14—just three days after these terrible events—was the anniversary of the firing on Fort McHenry. That was in 1814. One hundred eighty-seven years later, we have all taken comfort from the same sight that inspired Francis Scott Key. On the tops of skyscrapers, in front of government buildings, on police cars and fire trucks and taxis, on the front porches of thousands of homes, on millions of shirts and blouses and coats, draped on the blackened wall of the Pentagon, we all saw it: Our flag was still there.

That’s proof that the American spirit endures—and you can find it on just about every block in every community in this country. This simple, reassuring fact provides a firm foundation, I believe, for the work we have to do.

In times like these, our first thoughts naturally are for the well-being of our families and our fellow citizens. But beyond these immediate personal concerns, I believe we have a specific and critically important responsibility as preservationists. We’re all aware of the importance of healing the nation’s physical wounds, of strengthening the nation’s defenses—but we can’t lose sight of the importance of nurturing the nation’s soul.

In the context of this pressing need to heal and move on, our work as preservationists has an importance—a relevance—that is greater than ever before.

Think for a moment about where the blows fell on September 11. Not on missile bases or factories or power plants or shipyards. No, the targets were people and buildings that symbolize America’s military and economic strength.
Did the terrorists really believe that an attack on the Pentagon would bring our military to its knees? Or that destroying the World Trade Center would shatter America’s financial structure? Probably not—but they recognized the enormous importance of symbols.

As preservationists, we recognize their importance too. We know that place has power. We know that we can read about our history in books, but we also know that facts on paper are no more or less important than truth on the ground—truth made tangible in place.

History says, “This is what happened.” Preservation says, “Right here”—and that simple addition gives our knowledge of history an immediacy that is absolutely essential if we hope to make an understanding of the past a springboard to a better future.

Similarly, we can learn about shared values from mentors at home, in school or a house of worship, but those values take on a new and amplified reality when we can see them embodied in a place. Back in 1966, the visionaries who sought to define the work of preservation in the groundbreaking report With Heritage So Rich encapsulated this concept when they wrote that our movement’s ultimate success would be determined by its ability to “give a sense of orientation to our society, using structures and objects of the past to establish values of time and place.”

The places we cherish—the places that we, as preservationists, work to save—are symbols, but they are not abstractions. They are real and tangible. They surround, support, and illuminate almost every aspect of our daily lives. And they embody our most fundamental values.

The nation’s schools symbolize the value of education, the importance of good
citizenship. Our courthouses embody our commitment to the rule of law. State capitols and city halls are monumental representations of the grandeur and stability of democratic government. Shrines like the Lincoln Memorial and the Statue of Liberty refresh the wells of patriotism that lie deep within us. Churches and synagogues and mosques symbolize our freedom to worship as we please. Barns and fields and farmhouses remind us of our strong ties to the land and summon images of the restless, adventurous spirit that pushed us across a continent. Main Streets from coast to coast are a bricks-and-mortar textbook on the virtues of hard work and free enterprise. Residential neighborhoods everywhere speak eloquently about the things that we cherish most: community, family, home.

They are buildings, certainly. But they are much more than that. They are the places we depend on as anchors in a restless, uncertain world. They are the well-springs of the sense of continuity that one historian has called “part of the very backbone of human dignity.” They are the magnets that pull us together to commemorate, to celebrate, to mourn, to mark the major passages in our national life. They are, in effect, the story of us as a nation and a people—a powerful story written in wood and stone and steel. We need them. Preservationists have been saying that for a long time, and now—probably more than ever before—people understand what we mean. A part of what makes us human is our need to belong to a specific place with a history, a geography, and a set of values.

A nation at war needs these places more than ever. Arthur Schlesinger has written that the recent history of America is a story of “too much plurlibus and not enough unum.”

In times like these, unity is essential. An understanding of the history and values that we share is part of the cultural “glue” that binds us together, that keeps our society from cracking apart into dozens of separate pieces. If we’re to meet the challenge of living in a changed world, it is imperative that we pledge our best efforts to recognizing and safeguarding the places that help give us a sense of community—and a sense of continuity.

We need these places—but we can lose them. We’ve always known they are fragile, but last month, in images that will stay with us for the rest of our lives, we were reminded of just how quickly and stunningly our symbols can be taken from us. For some time now, we’ve been saying that the National Trust’s mission is to protect the irreplaceable. In the aftermath of September 11 we realize anew, with a terrible clarity, how important this mission is.

More than 150 years ago, the English artist and critic John Ruskin wrote, “Architecture is to be regarded by us with the most serious thought. We may live without her, we may worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.”

In times like these, we need to remember who we are. It’s essential to remember the long process that made us Americans, to remember the struggles, the crises, the triumphs that we’ve known in the past—and to be sustained and empowered by that memory. This means that, more than ever before, we preservationists must work to ensure that the places that embody what America stands for are kept safe, firm, and alive so that we can continue to learn from them, be enriched by them, draw strength and inspiration from them.

So what happens now? It’s a complicated question, but it has, I think, a deceptively simple answer: We go on.
As individual Americans, we’ll go on with our lives. As preservationists, we’ll go on with our job, strengthened by a renewed conviction that our job is essential to the unity and well-being of the nation we love.

There is plenty of work to be done right now. There is an entire sector of a city to be repaired or rebuilt. There are thousands of businesses, institutions, and individuals to be housed. Perhaps most important, there is a wound in the nation’s soul to be healed.

It’s an enormous job—and I’m very pleased to report that the National Trust has already rolled up its sleeves and started to work. Here’s a quick snapshot of what we’re doing:

- The Trust is participating in a working group of ten public- and private-sector organizations that will undertake a comprehensive, coordinated effort to assess damage to historic buildings in lower Manhattan and deal with other preservation issues stemming from the tremendous damage in that area.
- As an outgrowth of this collaboration with our New York partners, the National Trust is one of five organizations that have established the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund, which will make grants to help alleviate the impact of the disaster and to stabilize, renovate, and restore damaged historic sites in Lower Manhattan. We’ve already pledged $10,000 to this fund, and we’re prepared to do more.
- The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, a National Trust historic site located within sight of Ground Zero, opened its doors to shelter those fleeing the financial district on September 11. Now, as part of its long-standing commitment to programs that promote cultural tolerance and understanding, the museum—with support from Trust employee contributions—is launching new initiatives focusing on understanding the Arab-American experience.
- National Trust staff are also contributing to the Service Employees September 11th Relief Fund, established to provide assistance to the thousands of janitors, day porters, security guards, tour guides, and other service employees working in the
World Trade Center and the Pentagon who were injured in the attacks, or who are out of work indefinitely because of the damage to these buildings, as well as help to the survivors of those killed.

These efforts mark the mere beginning of what will be a long process of recovery and rebuilding. I’m convinced that it will challenge this organization and the preservation movement as a whole. Fortunately we are positioned to meet the challenge effectively. Our financial base is strong and getting stronger. And our programs to help Americans appreciate their heritage and strengthen efforts to save it are meeting unprecedented success.

My confidence in the National Trust’s ability to meet this challenge extends to the preservation movement as a whole. We’ve never been stronger. Historic sites across the country are doing a better job than ever of linking us with our past and reminding us of its relevance to our daily lives. There are more—and more effective—statewide and local organizations than ever before. Together, we’re making a real difference—a difference you can see in landmark buildings put to innovative uses; in traditional downtowns given new economic life; in historic neighborhood schools adapted to provide state-of-the-art learning environments for today’s students; in farmland and open spaces protected from wasteful sprawl; in historic sites where interpretive programs bring our heritage alive; and in communities rescued from decades of disinvestment and deterioration.

Because of the great strides our movement has made in recent decades, it’s hard to find a city or town where preservation’s benefits aren’t clearly and proudly—and even profitably—displayed. This widespread success is helping vast new audiences learn what you and I have always known: that preservation is not about buildings, it’s about lives. It’s about saving historic places, not just as isolated bits of architecture and landscape, but as environments where we can connect with the lives of the generations that came before us, places where we can

The places we cherish as Americans are tangible and real, and they symbolize our history and values, such as farmsteads and fields that remind us of our ties to the land.

Photo by Byrd Wood
build and maintain safe, rich, meaningful lives for ourselves and the generations that will come after us.

Our strengths, our skills, our experience, and our unique perspective will see us through this challenge. But I am convinced that it won’t be easy—and what’s more, it certainly won’t be quick. In the altered context in which we now operate, many questions remain to be answered:

- How will the changing and uncertain state of the economy affect us?
- How will the events of September 11 affect the growing momentum of the back-to-the-city movement?
- Can we take steps to ensure that smart-growth issues such as improved passenger rail and mass-transit options and increased development density are included in the national recovery agenda?
- Can we develop innovative yet sensitive ways to address the very real concerns for public safety in historic buildings and gathering places?
- How can we best help the public understand the importance of a strong commitment to historic preservation as an essential component of building our national unity?

These are tough questions. There are dozens more, all equally challenging. We’ll need time and perspective and lots of serious conversation before we find answers to them.

As Americans, one of our greatest strengths is our identity. Knowing who we are makes us strong. Knowing where we came from makes us confident. Knowing the legacy we have inherited makes us part of a powerful partnership between past, present, and future.

Passing on that knowledge—of who we are, where we came from, and what is the legacy that shapes and enriches us—is what preservation is all about. It’s what makes preservation such important—and yes, noble—work.

The Talmud tells us, “We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.” As preservationists, we have a unique way of seeing things. Our vision can help America find its way through the uncertainties of this new world. We will pass on that vision.

As preservationists, we understand the strength that comes from a shared sense of the rich heritage that is ours as Americans. We will pass on that heritage—and the strength that grows with it.

We know that our work is America’s work. We know that the heritage we share is worthy of our best efforts to save it. We know that the skills and vision we offer have never been more important—or more needed. We have an enormous job to do—but it’s the same job we’ve been doing for a long time, and we know how to do it well.

So let us go forward with a renewed sense of purpose. The heritage we preserve will sustain us in these very different and trying times. The heritage we pass on will enrich and inspire generations of Americans to come.

Richard Moe is the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
The National Trust has asked me to say a word about the wound that has been inflicted upon us. It seems right to do so here because what happened on September 11 is so central to questions of preservation and of the experience of architecture and its meaning in human life. Especially the architecture of the city. From the days of Uruk and its king Gilgamesh, as described in the great Sumerian epic of that name, the city has been thought of in terms of human immortality. We build in it in relation to those who have lived before us and our buildings are a legacy to those who come after us. Therefore, in the city, human life is extended beyond its own individual span. So, after a long and fruitless quest, Gilgamesh decides at last that the only immortality he can hope for resides in the well-fired bricks he has built into the walls of his city’s temple, which will live on after he himself is gone.

Still, today, we expect that from buildings, that they will outlive us. From that point of view, the Modernist cult of impermanence and of contempt for the past was a betrayal of architecture’s major mission and of the city itself. It is because of the mass public reaction against precisely that point of view that the National Trust for Historic Preservation has grown so strong over the past 40 years. We now know that we have to protect the buildings that define our world. So much the more are we shaken in our lives, and in our hope of life, when our most important—or perhaps only our most conspicuous—buildings are cruelly destroyed by enemy action. The enemy knows this. “Here is America struck by God Almighty ... so that its greatest buildings are destroyed,” he said. “Grace and gratitude to God. America has been filled with horror ... Thanks be to God.”

But here the World Trade Center poses a special problem. Few architects and critics have ever liked the World Trade Towers very much. That is surely an understatement.
They seemed too tall and too inarticulate, out of scale with the great old group of skyscrapers and casting doubt upon the relevance of the lively conversation they were carrying on with each other. Then Cesar Pelli in his World Financial Center buildings drew the towers into a pyramidal organization something like that of the old group, but at a new scale. And they became tolerable, but still lacking the figural life of the early skyscrapers.

Then the World Trade Towers were struck, and instantly their associations changed for us. They changed, charged with apocalyptic pain and transcendent human courage. Their inordinate height came to seem heroic, and the void they left in their fall wholly unbearable. It now seemed to us that they alone in New York had risen commandingly to the scale of the vast sky and into the world of the airplane, the space of the continent; and they became, in retrospect, the American Sublime, now irretrievably lost, leaving emptiness behind them.

And how do we feel about that? Wallace Stevens, an insurance executive who worked in a high-rise in Hartford, asked us just that in a poem he called “The American Sublime.” It concludes:

But how does one feel?  
One grows used to the weather,  
The landscape and that,  
And the sublime comes down  
To the spirit itself,

The spirit and space,  
The empty spirit  
In vacant space.  
What wine does one drink?  
What bread does one eat?

But what would we feel today if the passengers on Flight 93 had not wrestled it to the ground? Wholly unprepared, and wanting to live, they beat the enemy in his own major strength which was his readiness to die. We can hope that they had a moment before the end to savor the ferocious joy of victory. Because they were victorious. If they had not been, there is every likelihood that the

Now that the World Trade Towers no longer define New York’s skyline, architects and planners debate an appropriate memorial and use for the site.  
Photo by Minoru Yamasaki
dome of the Capitol would have fallen. We remember how its base stood empty during all the early years of the Civil War until the new high dome finally rose complete in 1863 and the Statue of Freedom crowned its top and Grant came to guard it down below. Then we would have felt the wound, from which the airline passengers preserved us. Nevertheless, we would have begun to rebuild as rapidly as possible, to make it all look exactly as it had before.

But what do we do about the World Trade Center Towers? Here the answer is not so simple. There are many good reasons not to crowd thousands of people into skyscrapers any more. There are other ways to work and to communicate with each other and, terrorist attacks aside, the hazard of concentration in tall buildings is always present. So it would be logical to replace the towers with several lower buildings, as the lessee of the site suggests he would like to do. Or, if we look for a memorial, we might retain the void they left, now so movingly framed by Pelli’s buildings. “I built them as around a mountain,” Pelli said, “and now the mountain is gone.” But then what would we feel? Perhaps defeated: all that long century of aspiration gone, the remaining skyscrapers looking huddled, the American horizon, always challenged by us, now oppressive to us all. Reason may demand that we face just that, but it goes against the grain.

Still, no one knows what we may come to feel in the years to come, how we may grow, or what wisdom long and perhaps bitter experience may teach us. Surely, like all the great cities of the past, New York, so savagely mutilated, is for that very reason dearer to us than it was before. We still have all our cities to cherish and defend, their fabric to preserve, and their people as well.

New Haven, Conn., is the city I know best. It was laid out in 1638 as an ideal Con-
gregational community, on a nine-square plan based on the reconstruction of 1604 by Villalpandus of the prophet Ezekiel’s new Jerusalem. That city of refuge for the exiles from the old, smitten city was described by Ezekiel as set by Jehovah under a mountain; here New Haven is set by East Rock, rising, glowing north of the harbor. And out of that relationship and its development over the centuries, along with the proposed expansion of New Haven during the City Beautiful period, and in response to the assault upon it by the coming of the Interstates and the redevelopment of the 1960s, came Duany Plater-Zyberk’s New Urbanism, which was fostered at Yale. Its design and planning approach can be seen at Seaside, Fla., begun in 1979, the first of many new towns and neighborhoods that the New Urbanism has since created for a more or less affluent middle class.

The New Urbanism’s fundamental intention is to build humane low-income housing in the center of our cities or where the dilapidated projects of Modernist planning once stood. Toward the fulfillment of that aim, Robert A. M. Stern’s Subway Suburb, of 1976, was the first proposal of all, and it predated Seaside by three years. You all know how, on a site in the South Bronx, burnt out and unwanted but with its utilities in place, Stern proposed to build the kind of American town that most Americans of whatever economic level seem to want to live in, one shaped by a firm grid of streets with a town green in the center. Stern threw out the high-rise slabs of the old projects that had destroyed communities everywhere and have since been demolished all over the United States, and he based his houses more or less on the two- and three-family, frontal-gabled, vernacular type in New Haven that Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk had studied a few years before. HUD never carried out the scheme, but it did build a few single-family houses on the site, certainly of a less appropriate type, but they were all snapped up by eager buyers, even though they lacked the supporting town plan.

That was supplied by the New Urbanism in its infilling urban groups of the ’90s, like the Central neighborhood in Cleveland, by DPZ, which remade a destroyed urban neighborhood near the city center. It was built in a local vernacular as lovingly detailed as that of Seaside, and was supported by HUD as one of its Nehemiah Neighborhoods, predecessors of the Hope VI program. The Hope VI program was conceived in the late 1980s but was largely funded between 1993 and 1995 under the direction of the great Henry Cisneros, who also uncompromisingly embraced the principles of the New Urbanism for the Hope VI designs. HUD’s program attempts to reestablish the urban structure in center city sites where it has been destroyed by projects like the Horner Houses in Chicago. In its place, Peter Calthorpe, who was at Yale’s school only during 1976-77, reweaves an urban pattern of streets and trees and squares, and the dif-

When the architecture of the poor is basically of the same type as that of the rich and is different from it not in kind but only in degree, it cannot help but encourage a kind of comradeship, a sense of community, that did not exist before.
ferences are at once obvious between pure disorienting hell and, if perhaps not as sensitive as DPZ might have been, still a good solid neighborhood, a firm, civilized place in highly urban Chicago. At a gentler scale, Ray Gindroz, who taught at Yale for many years, starts in Norfolk, Va., with this no-man’s land and transforms it into a lawn overlooked by porches. Or in Louisville, a barrack becomes a street of houses, the kind of place people can live in as individuals, citizens, and good neighbors.

In fact, the Hope VI program recalls and revives the most humane and effective federal intervention in low-income housing that American history can show. This was the Emergency Wartime Housing of World War I. The government itself built a whole series of neighborhoods in industrial centers up and down the east coast. Great care was taken to find out how the workers who were to live in them wanted to live. And it was stipulated that each group would be built in the vernacular of the region. So Henry Klutho in Jacksonville employed the wooden board and batten of the Stick Style and the Cracker Vernacular of Florida. Bridgeport, Conn., which was called the Essen of the United States at that time, had seven of these neighborhoods at different scales, all under the general direction of John Nolen, then the dean of American planners.

The most beautiful one was for the lowest paid workers of all and was called, touchingly, Seaside Park. It was by very good architects, R. Clipston Sturgis, Arthur Shurtleff, and Andrew H. Hepburn, who later went on to Williamsburg to work for Rockefeller. It was in the Georgian vernacular of New England, but being built in brick, it had a somewhat Southern air. It has the Amer-

Cleveland’s Central neighborhood, designed by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and built in the local vernacular, replaced a destroyed urban neighborhood near the city center.

Photo courtesy of Vincent Scully
ican neighborhood structure of lot, sidewalk, grass plot, trees, and street. And the image of the single-family house directs the design: although to keep costs low, buildings were subdivided into four apartments, as was being done in the English Garden Cities of the time. But each has a brave door and a fine bay window and a clear identity, and the town green is there as well.

Directly after the war, there was a congressional investigation which concluded that the whole program had been socialistic and unAmerican. And the architects of Seaside Park were especially reprimanded for “undue elegance in design.” Then, directly across the street (Iranistan Boulevard), another housing group was built that scrupulously avoided those defects. It dates from just before World War II. Modernism has struck and the thing is now all flat-roofed barracks, abstractly disposed on a super block and floating in asphalt. It has had to be rebuilt more than once, and became for a long time the center of drug distribution for this section of Bridgeport. So much for those who claim that environment has no obvious effect on human behavior.

We saw that in New Haven, in the area north of Yale’s gymnasium, just beyond the Nine Squares and ghettoized in part by the obstruction of Grove Street Cemetery. It was then left bereft by the departure of the Winchester rifle factory and of all the other factories where most of its people were once employed. Its inhabitants, many of them now unemployed and disoriented—for the grid of streets had been wholly destroyed—became convinced by the way they had to live that they were a permanent underclass with little to lose. It was an unhappy and sometimes a dangerous place to be.

Now, though, we can walk up Ashmun Street and see a Hope VI neighborhood, designed by Bruce Heyl of During World War I, the government built a series of neighborhoods near industrial centers along the east coast to house workers. Seaside Park in Bridgeport, Conn., was built in the vernacular of the region and included a town green, sidewalks, and landscaping. Illustration courtesy of Vincent Scully
Fletcher Thompson, of Bridgeport. And we can walk there. The feeling has changed. And why would it not? The density may be too low: 414 units instead of the old 800 or so, and a bit too suburban—which puts a strain on Section 8 and other programs. But compared to what it was before it is a paradise now. The crummy high rises are gone and the last of the sullen low rises are all being torn down. And when the architecture of the poor is basically of the same type as that of the rich and is different from it not in kind but only in degree, it cannot help but encourage a kind of comradeship, a sense of community, that did not exist before. In the end it is human beings who are rehabilitated and preserved.

In New Haven the mayor is especially proud of the reestablishment of the grid of streets with the grass plots and the good masonry curb. Outmoded codes have been derailed. The streets are kept reasonably narrow; mid-century set-back regulations are ignored. The utilities are underground and the trees are being planted. A place has been made. It is a clear urban order worthy of the great town plan itself, and defined by the repetition of a simple architectural type like the strong and simple building types that once defined Yale’s Old Brick Row open to New Haven’s Green. That’s what makes a city: the type, the street, the trees.

It is worthy, too, of the intention of the city’s founders to shape a community where town and college, city and university, were to work together to make a better world. That’s what it is after all: God’s city under the mountain, Ezekiel’s Jerusalem restored, America itself, new haven of exiles, Heaven on earth for all mankind to see.
I have been wonderfully blessed in my 30 years of working to tell important stories in African-American history. I have learned so much and it is this that I would share with you today.

Kansas City’s 18th & Vine

On a warm fall day in 1995 I arrived in Kansas City, Mo., to be interviewed for a job as executive director of the 18th & Vine Authority, the authority established by the city to manage the cultural component of the Historic Jazz District. This district, which was only nine blocks at the time, is described in the National Register as being “significant in the areas of commerce and ethnic heritage for its historical importance as a center for black commerce in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The district is also significant in the area of performing arts as the most intact groupings of buildings in Kansas City associated with the growth and development of jazz music in the 1920s and 1930s. The district is composed of 42 buildings and structures...Since 1930 construction has been limited in the district and it retains its early 20th century appearance and character. The period of significance extends from 1886 to 1941.”

I asked the taxi driver to take me to 18th & Vine. This moment is unforgettable in my life, for as I strolled down 18th Street, I stood in front of the historic Lincoln Building, which is across from the area of the Jazz District that housed some 200 jazz clubs in Kansas City. The Lincoln Building was the only building still occupied, in use as an African-American business complex. The front of the building faces 18th Street, but the business patrons entered from the back parking lot. The street was so seldom used because the neighborhood had declined as integration afforded people the opportunity to move out of the district. As I stood across from what was once a striving black economic district from 1920 through 1950, I saw that many
windows were broken and all of the buildings were boarded up to prevent further vandalism. Despite the effort to revitalize the buildings by the Black Economic Union, which had been ongoing for about 20 years, the district appeared to be almost a ghost town. Suddenly I saw a shadow appear to move in front of the windows. Of course most people would say that it was the light, but I felt it was the spirit of the people who once lived and worked in the buildings.

The African-Americans who had lived in the vicinity of 18th & Vine from the early 1880s were (1) descendants of slaves, (2) part of the westward movement when the state of Kansas was known as the Port of Black Colonization, and (3) musicians in search of economic opportunities after Prohibition closed down places to perform in New Orleans.

The neighborhood was residential in character and because of segregation blacks were only allowed to live between 8th and 25th Streets. Some residents said they could not rent or buy out of the district. The 18th & Vine area was their entire life. Here they lived, shopped, celebrated, worshipped, and did not move out of the district until death.

The neighborhood became alive in the ’20s and ’30s at the height of the jazz era. It became a bridge community where blacks and whites met to celebrate the music they called Kansas City–style jazz. The African-Americans lived upstairs over the nightclubs and business establishments. The incredible Buck O’Neil, president of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and former coach, stated that if you were looking for anyone in Kansas City, just stand on 18th & Vine—it was the meeting place.

I never forget the champions of the Vine: the preservationist Jane Flynn and the Jackson County Historical Society; musicians such as Jay McShann, Charlie Parker, Count Basie, Joe Turner, and Ella Fitzgerald who kept the...
The district alive with their music; and their descendants who fought constantly with politicians to make sure that the 18th & Vine area became the Historic Jazz District.

Jazz is America’s original classical music. It is African based, but it does not discount its European experience. Jazz is an interpretive music that—like spirituals, the blues, and gospel—arises from our journey in this country. It celebrates all cultures in America and is truly about freedom. The challenge of the 18th & Vine project is to make sure the district reflects that history and gives voice to the music’s roots.

The great lesson of this project was discovering that the Midwest had a rich virgin history. We know far too little in America of this experience and the challenge has been to interpret the story when both businesses and dwellings are gone. But descendants can be found, and the material culture and spirits of the era still remain.

The Motown Story

In 1992 I received an incredible offer to become the director of the Motown Historical Museum. This was an opportunity for me to interpret the history of a black migration family from Georgia that had achieved the American dream.

The Gordy family stayed true to its family values. The folklore is that Pop Gordy had a successful year on his farm in Georgia and had collected around $2,000. He decided that he could not cash his check in this town because he would be killed and robbed. So he boarded a train to Detroit. He probably had heard that Henry Ford was hiring workers at $5 a day. When he got to Detroit he resided with relatives and recognized that the neighborhood needed an
African-American store. He returned for his family and began the incredible American journey.

It is his son, Berry Gordy, who founded Motown Records. His empire was 10 neighborhood houses on West Grand Boulevard. My challenge was to work on the Henry Ford Motown exhibition project and to restore the home where Berry started the company in the 1950s to the way it was then.

Back then Detroit was referred to as the Motor Town, later shortened to Motown. Motown Records was conceived in a neighborhood house in the shadow of General Motors. It was in the ’60s and ’70s that Motown Records became known as the “hit factory.”

There was a uniqueness about this city and the Motown Record Company founder. He embraced young neighborhood musicians and untrained voices to make the hits, drawing on the musicians’ improvisational skills.

Detroit loves the Motown sound. It is the neighborhood spirit that kept the music so fresh in America’s mind. Motown music is as alive in Detroit today as it was 40 years ago.

The challenge in interpreting Motown was to capture the history of a family business, retaining the family’s original culture, and the beauty of struggle. The lesson was understanding that history has champions and that there are family and town champions.

The Afro-American Museum in Philadelphia

In 1985 I spent time working at the Afro-American Museum in Philadelphia. The Afro-American Museum was an urban museum built by the city to note the contributions of the African-American community. The museum was built two blocks from the Liberty Bell, five blocks from the historic Mother Bethel AME Church, and, by some twist of fate, two blocks from the 18th-century African-American burial grounds that were discovered later. Philadelphia was one of the original cities in the colony of Pennsylvania, and the African-American community there has a rich colonial heritage. Early research at Temple University’s Charlie Blockson Collections found that 80 families still in Philadelphia are direct descendants of residents who lived there prior to the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

Working in Philadelphia was a great learning experience because the folk rituals and traditions of African-American museum visitors were celebrated there. Never have I witnessed celebration of a historical tradition like in Philadelphia. The challenge is to place value on this expression beyond what is often called entertainment.
Americans were practiced openly there. One could experience and record rituals and celebrations associated with the Marcus Garvey movement, the Richard Allen movement, the Migration movement, and the Masonic movement. Never have I witnessed celebration of a historical tradition like in Philadelphia. The challenge is to place value on this expression beyond what is often called entertainment.

My experience in Philadelphia taught me there is always evidence of the past even though it appears to be lost. For example, the 18th-century African-American burial grounds in Philadelphia were just found in 1980. In New York, African-American burial grounds were found in 1990. The grounds were destroyed in the World Trade Center terrorist attack but the early remains still exist at Howard University for testing and documentation.

Early Work in Rhode Island

And now I come to the beginning of this journey. Providence is my home, and my journey began in the '70s. I realized there was a story to be told that most of America was not aware of—that of the Rhode Island Regiment (the Black Regiment) and its role in fighting for this country's freedom, particularly in the Battle of Bloody Run Brook. I must admit that I was always a little angry to think that when people refer to African-Americans' role in military history, they would talk about the Massachusetts 54th but not the Rhode Island Regiment. So part of my thirst for knowledge was to tell that story and unravel an unknown past.

The entire state of Rhode Island is an enormous public history project. There are 91 historical societies, each a store of knowledge, each willing to share information about the presence of African-Americans in the town's history or in
the state—things like names, occupations, locations—and there is a general expression of respect for that history.

The challenge is, how do you get the public to understand this history—of plantations, slavery—and to recognize that learning cannot flourish without acknowledgment of that past? It is sometimes uncomfortable for African-Americans. It’s uncomfortable for the descendents of white slave masters and the native Americans, too, because they all lived at the same time, lived in the same town, and have had the same names for over 200 years.

The Continuum of Past, Present, Future

We are all re-evaluating the freedom that we take for granted. On September 11, 2001, we could not help but wonder if this freedom might be in jeopardy. We must ask if we are succeeding in keeping all the things that matter in telling the story of this new nation—bold with ideas and daring to believe that, as free men and women, we could live together, share different views, and yet be as one in a crisis such as the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

We often have to be reminded of how similar we are. We share a commonality in each of our minds and hearts that cannot be explained. It is simply a part of the journey of life.

In the African world view, the invisible world of spirit, man, and the visible world of nature all exist along a continuum and form an organic reality. The same is true of the relationship between the past, present, and future. In song lyrics based on Birago Diop’s poem “Breaths” we are reminded of this continuum.

Listen more often to things than to beings
Listen more often to things than to beings
Tis the ancestors’ breath
When the fire’s voice is heard
Tis the ancestors’ breath
In the voice of the waters
Ah…… wsh……
Ah…… wsh……
Those who have died have never never left

The dead are not under the earth
They are in the rustling trees
They are in the groaning woods
They are in the crying grass
They are in the moaning rocks
The dead are not under the earth
Those who have died have never never left

The dead have a pact with the living
They are in the woman’s breast
They are in the wailing child
They are with us in the home
They are with us in the crowd
The dead have a pact with the living.

Rowena Stewart, D.H., is executive director of the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City, Mo.

“Breaths” lyrics adapted from the poem by Birago Diop, music by Ysaye M. Barnwell, copyright 1980, reprinted by permission of Barnwell’s Notes Publishing.
We live, my dear soul, in an age of trial. What will be the outcome, the consequences, I know not.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, 1774.

Carpenters’ Hall sits out of the way of the flow of traffic between Third and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia, back maybe 200 feet in what’s called Carpenters’ Court. To me it’s one of the most eloquent buildings in America. It’s very close to Independence Hall. It’s part of the Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia. But many people walk right by and don’t see it, which is a shame. It was finished in 1773, the year before construction of this church [the First Baptist Church, Providence, R.I.] began. They are contemporaries and express the same sense of balance and light, balance and light being two of the great themes of the Enlightenment.

Carpenters’ Hall was built by the Philadelphia Carpenters’ Company, which was dedicated to fine workmanship and integrity in building. The Philadelphia Carpenters’ Company still owns Carpenters’ Hall. It was the place where, upstairs, Benjamin Franklin established his Library Company, which evolved into the first public library in America. And certainly along with freedom of religion, access to books, to learning, free to the people, is one of the greatest of our institutions.

Carpenters’ Hall, much more importantly, was the gathering place for the First Continental Congress in the summer of 1774. It’s a place of a great, immeasurably important beginning. And what is so eloquent about it, is that it is so very small. It’s only 50 by 50 feet square. You could put it inside this meetinghouse where we are today with room to spare. This church measures 80 by 80. As I say, Carpenters’ Hall is a very small building.

And when you stand there, in that very real, authentic place, you feel the presence of that other time, that history in a way that would be impossible did it not exist.

John Adams was one of the 56 delegates who gathered in Carpenters’ Hall in 1774, and as he wrote to his wife Abigail back in Massachusetts, he thought he had come to one of the greatest conclaves of the greatest minds of all time. He was amazed by the range and variety of talents on display. “The art and address of ambassadors from a dozen belligerent powers of Europe, nay, of a conclave of cardinals at the election of a Pope… would not exceed the specimens we have seen.” Here were eloquence and acuteness equal to any. “Every question is discussed with moderation, and an acuteness and a minuteness equal to that of Queen Elizabeth’s Privy Council,” he wrote. (Hyperbole was a great part of the fun of living in the 18th century.)

But after being subjected to a month of such “acuteness and minuteness” over each and every issue at hand, irrespective of importance, Adams was weary to death, as he said. The business of Congress had become tedious beyond expres-
“This assembly is like no other that ever existed. Every man in it is a great man—an orator, a critic, a statesman, and therefore every man upon every question must show his oratory, his criticism, and his political abilities.

“The consequence of this is that business is drawn and spun out to immeasurable length. I believe if it was moved and seconded that we should come to a resolution that three and two make five, we should be entertained with logic and rhetoric, law, history, politics, and mathematics concerning the subject for two whole days, and then we would pass the resolution unanimously in the affirmative.”

To hold such a letter in your hands at about the same distance from your eyes as it would have been from Abigail Adams’ eyes, or to read what she wrote to him holding her letters in hand, is to make a physical, tactile contact with those distant human beings. There’s nothing quite like it. You feel their mortality. You feel a common bond with them as fellow human beings.

The Adams letters are nearly all in the Massachusetts Historical Society. They’re written on rag paper and so they will last forever, if properly taken care of. And the importance of that experience to students, to scholars, to all of us, any of us, is irreplaceable—just as is the tactile connection we make in a space like Carpenters’ Hall or this church.

These buildings, those people, it might be said, aren’t aspects of the past at all. One might indeed surmise there’s no such thing as the past. Adams, Jefferson, George Washington, they didn’t walk about saying, “Isn’t this fascinating, living in the past? Aren’t we picturesque?” It was the present, their present. Not our present, their present. And we have to understand that.

Nor were they “just like we are,” as is often said. Their present was part of a different time, and because of that, they were different from us. We
have to take into consideration, for example, all they had to contend with that we don’t even have to think about—all the inconveniences, discomforts, and fears. And the hard, hard work.

There are more than 1,000 letters just between Abigail and John Adams. Abigail herself has left over 2,000 letters. Think of that. And when you consider all she had to do just to get through a day—up at 5:00 in the morning, waking the hired girl, starting breakfast, tending the fire, feeding stock, running the farm in her husband’s absence, which in the aggregate came to ten years.

These were two of the most devoted patriots of their time, sacrificing for their country. “I wonder if future generations will ever know what we have suffered in their behalf,” Abigail wrote.

Because schools were closed, she had to educate the children at home. She had to cope with constant shortages and runaway inflation, and somehow hold her own, keep her equilibrium, in the face of the frequent horrors of rampant epidemics, dysentery, and smallpox.

At one point she took all of her children, plus a number of relatives and neighbors, some 17 people, into Boston to be inoculated for smallpox. This was a very dangerous, brave decision, for even if one survived such an ordeal, the misery, the wretched illness that went with it was something nobody would ever wish to experience. And because communication with her husband was so difficult and slow, she had no choice but to make such decisions on her own.

And yet at the close of her long days there on the farm in Braintree, at maybe 10:00 or 11:00 at night, Abigail Adams would sit by the fire at her kitchen table, take up a quill pen and write some of the most thoughtful, telling letters by any American of the time.

The house is still there. It is the house she lived in as a
bride and through all the years of the Revolution when John Adams was off serving the country. Their first son, John Quincy Adams, our sixth President, was born there. And when you go there, you will be moved by how small it is. And how sturdy. Next door is the very similar house where John Adams was born. There they stand, two plain, well-built New England saltboxes by the side of the road. The third Adams house, the much larger Old House, as it’s called, is the house John and Abigail moved into after their return from diplomatic service in Europe in 1788.

Then there’s the magnificent house they lived in in Paris. There is the house where Adams lived in Amsterdam and in which he very nearly died of fever while securing vitally needed loans from the Dutch during the Revolution.

The house where he and Abigail lived in London, when Adams was our first ambassador to the Court of St. James’, also still stands, the last 18th-century house on Grosvenor Square. Talk about buildings redolent with history! Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Bulfinch, Benjamin West, John Trumbull all came and went.

We can find Adams and Jefferson in Philadelphia still.

**All these buildings, these American places, all are tangible, evocative expressions of those distant times and those extraordinary people. And those people are here, with us, in a way they would not be if those structures were not here.**

Imagine if there were no such buildings, if there were few or no historic places. Imagine how it would be if there were no Gettysburg battlefield, no Brooklyn Bridge, no Faneuil Hall. The list could be very long. Each and every one could have been swept away, destroyed, heedlessly like so much else.

We Americans say, “What’s new?” Nobody ever greets you saying, “What’s old?” Well, maybe preservationists do.

We think we live in difficult, uncertain times. We think we have worries. We think our leaders face difficult decisions. When John Adams went off to Philadelphia in 1774, he knew, as the other delegates knew, that only the previous year more than 300 people had died in the city of smallpox. As it was, one delegate would die of the disease.

Nor was there any certainty of success in their efforts, or any groundswell of popular support.

Had they taken a poll in Philadelphia in 1776, they would have scrapped the whole idea of independence. A third of the country was for it, a third of the country was against it, while the remaining third, in the old human way, was waiting to see who came out on top.
We live in a world where there are 20 cities with populations over 10 million people. In 1776 the entire population of the American colonies was 2,500,000. Philadelphia, the largest American city, had all of 30,000 people, a small town by our standards.

The same week the Continental Congress voted for independence, the British landed 32,000 troops on Staten Island. In other words, they landed a military force larger than the entire population of our largest city. When the delegates signed their names to that Declaration, pledging “our lives, our fortunes, our sacred honor,” those weren’t just words. Each was signing his own death warrant. They were declaring themselves traitors.

One of my favorite of all moments occurred when old Stephen Hopkins, a delegate from Rhode Island, who suffered from palsy, after fixing his spidery signature to the Declaration, remarked, “My hand trembles, but my heart does not.”

They were human beings. They weren’t gods. If they’d been gods, they deserve little credit because gods can do whatever they want. They had failings and flaws. They were guilty of vanity, ambition, all that we’re prone to as human beings.

The first line of the Declaration states the case perfectly. “When, in the course of human events…” Human is the operative word. The miracle was that with all their differences, their failings, their flaws, they rose to the occasion and accomplished what they did.

We’ve just been through an experience none of us will forget. The heartache, the sadness, the grief will stay with us as long as we live. I’m sure we all experience that sensation of waking up in the morning, and for about 30 seconds, maybe a minute, it’s not in our minds. And then suddenly it comes back, we remember.

Because of the magnitude of it. The magnitude of the crime, the magnitude of those
buildings coming down before our eyes, dust to dust in an instant, on our own home ground in what we had taken to be peace time.

It’s said that everything has changed. But everything has not changed. This is plain truth. We are still the strongest, most productive, wealthiest, the most creative, the most ingenious, the most generous nation in the world, with the greatest freedoms of any nation in the world, of any nation in all time.

We have resources beyond imagining, and the greatest of them is our brain-power. So far we’ve not only kept our heads, we’re using our heads. And we have much to be proud of since September 11. We have seen a revival of genuine patriotism such as we’ve not seen in our lifetime, or for maybe 50 years.

We’ve seen the veteran mayor of our greatest city and our new untried president both rise to the occasion in the best tradition of the best people who ever served the country and the people. We’ve seen the most divisive Congress in memory become the most united Congress in memory—at least for the time being. We have all of that to draw upon. And we have a further, all important, inexhaustible source of strength, and that is our story, our history, who we are, how we got to be where we are, what we have been through, what we have achieved, what we have built.

We know what footsteps we walk in. In late 1941 after Pearl Harbor, Winston Churchill crossed the Atlantic. In a marvelous speech he said, “We haven’t journeyed this far because we’re made of sugar candy.”

In his remarks at the National Prayer Service following September 11, President Bush said: “The commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time.” Amen.

Author and historian David McCullough is a trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
For more than 50 years, the General Services Administration has been the government’s leading provider of real estate services. We provide work space for over a million civilian employees in 100 federal agencies. Our involvement with historic properties is quite a big subject with many dimensions.

I’d like to give you a feel for what’s in our portfolio and some of the challenges we face, and a sense of our philosophy and serious commitment to preserving the historic and architectural treasures entrusted to us.

Nearly one half of the 1,700 buildings GSA owns are historic or at least of historic age. GSA’s 435 buildings listed in, or appearing to meet, National Register eligibility criteria provide about 55 million square feet of workspace. They include courthouses, customs houses, office buildings, laboratories, and border stations in all 50 states and several territories.

Public buildings constructed between the 1830s and 1930s set a high standard for design excellence and durability. Monumental entrances and elegant public spaces built in that era extend a gracious welcome to citizens visiting the offices of the federal government. During the 1930s, an expanded federal construction program introduced a new design esthetic but continued to maintain high standards for proportions, materials, and detailing in significant public buildings.

Preservation of these buildings is an integral part of our business.

We have five primary approaches to using historic buildings:

1. We reinvest in them so they can serve the modern federal workforce;
2. We reprogram them for new uses when necessary;
3. We lease out our historic properties to private tenants when there is no federal need;
4. We lease historic buildings (from non-federal building owners) and occasionally;
5. We acquire historic properties to meet federal needs.
First: By reinvesting in federally owned historic office buildings, we ensure that they can continue to serve a 21st-century workforce. Our chief investments are in safety, building systems improvements, and exterior maintenance.

Second: As federal space needs change, we keep buildings viable by reprogramming them to serve new functions.

For highly ornamented buildings like the Alexander Hamilton Customs House in New York City—which is one of my personal favorites—we look for tenants, such as the Bankruptcy Courts, that need formal spaces. We also look for uses that enable the public to enjoy our most outstanding spaces. The Customs House also houses the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian.

By using the special authority provided by Section 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we can also lease out space in underutilized historic federal buildings to non-federal tenants. Section 111 allows federal agencies to retain this rental revenue and reinvest it in historic buildings, so everybody gains. For example, we lease the Galveston, Tex., Customs House—the oldest federal building west of the Mississippi and a National Historic Landmark—to Galveston Historical Foundation for use as a public research center.

When space is not available in government-owned buildings, we consider historic buildings first when searching for spaces to lease. Historic industrial buildings such as the 1890s Stegmaier Brewery in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., provide daylight-filled, open-space work areas for a cross-section of consolidated federal agencies.

And finally, through our Good Neighbor and Design Excellence programs, GSA works with communities to make the most of historic properties it acquires. The Erie, Pa., federal courthouse expansion will reuse a 1930s Art Deco federal courthouse, a turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts municipal library, and a former Art Moderne clothing store—all linked by a sympathetic glass addition serving as the entrance portal to the new complex. We think it will be one of a kind.

Occasionally we acquire historic buildings from cities, states, or other federal agencies. For example, the 1920s La Vista del Arroyo luxury hotel in Pasadena, Calif., once...
an army hospital, now provides gracious housing for the U.S. Courts.

Management

It is a testament to the durability of the federal public building legacy that many of our historic buildings continue to serve the functions for which they were constructed. But much has changed in the way we manage these buildings.

GSA’s oversight of its owned and leased properties is a large and complex business.

During the 1990s the drive to balance the budget led to the government-wide focus on government that works better and costs less. The federal workforce and budget have been reduced. We are learning to do more with less money, to spend tax dollars wisely while maintaining high stewardship standards and high workspace standards for our federal client agencies.

The Public Buildings Service has adopted the real estate business practice of managing federal property as a portfolio of assets. Expenses must relate to income. Capital funding for repairs and improvements is based not only on need but also on the financial return expected for the government’s investment.

Federal agencies that lease space in either government-owned and privately owned properties pay rent to the Federal Buildings Fund. The fund pays for the cost of building operations, maintenance, repairs, and alterations, and for leasing other space where government space is not available.

To put it bluntly, the fund—our internal bank—is not equal to the task.

To grow the bottom-line and keep our historic buildings financially viable we must 1) increase our rental income and 2) look for ways to control expenses.

We can increase our rental income by:

- Reducing vacant space;
- Charging appropriately higher rents for superior space; and
- Leasing underutilized space to private entities, under Section 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

We can control expenses by:

- Setting priorities for repair and alteration with an emphasis on essential rehabilitation needs;
- Using repair and alteration methods that require less intervention;
- Making cost-effective changes to reduce energy consumption; and
- Focusing major restoration efforts on high visibility public spaces.

Unfortunately many government-owned public buildings, including our historic buildings, operate at a substantial loss, and there is only so much we can do within the constraints of our market-based pricing standards. Government Accounting Office studies on deferred maintenance of government-owned assets make it clear that the inventory cannot be maintained through current federal appropriation levels.

The good news is that proposed legislation on Capitol Hill—introduced in the House in October—will increase the ways we can leverage the equity of federal assets with private-sector investment. A bill to amend
the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 will help us to maintain the federal inventory by providing:

- increased authority to lease out space in all public buildings to the private sector;
- increased authority to engage in public-private partnerships to rehabilitate and redevelop federal property; and
- new authority to retain the proceeds from federal property disposals.

If this Property Reform legislation is enacted—and we are very optimistic that it will be—it will revolutionize the way we do business.

Stewardship

As our strategy for managing the federal portfolio evolves, we remain committed to the stewardship of our historic public buildings. Our capital investment program will continue to give additional weight to reinvesting in federal historic buildings—especially national landmarks such as the Court of Appeals in San Francisco; public buildings that are focal points in their communities such as the Pioneer Courthouse in Portland, Ore.; and buildings that maintain a federal presence in the center city such as our courthouse in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the oldest permanent federal building in old San Juan.

We’ll also actively seek to mend tears in the fabric of our cities while building tomorrow’s landmarks. In Scranton, Pa., we were able to persuade the city to let us demolish an apartment house that was tax revenue producing but architecturally incompatible with its neighbors, to construct a Courthouse Annex that would allow the federal courts to remain in the adjacent historic courthouse on the town square. The new annex has restored the design unity and enhanced the pedestrian scale of this important urban location. This is a gorgeous project, combining old and new with great impact.

We’re also taking a closer
look at our buildings from the more recent past which are now beginning to show their age. We have held a number of panel discussions bringing together nationally distinguished architects to explore how to assess these buildings and involve community groups in our plans for change. Our goal is to develop criteria to evaluate their value and to guide us with investment and real estate decisions for this part of the inventory.

As our needs change, we will make an extra effort to keep highly significant buildings economically viable so that they can be maintained in the federal inventory. The 1840s General Post Office in Washington, D.C., will reopen in May 2002 as a boutique hotel under a 60-year lease to the Kimpton Hotel Group.

We will also work to promote the redevelopment of older urban neighborhoods by leasing space in buildings like Tacoma’s Union Station. Catalyzing economic rebirth in urban areas is an important mission of government. This building’s original rotunda houses a glass museum which is open to the public. Courtrooms and other secure functions are housed in a rear addition.

**Security**

Security has always been a priority for the Public Buildings Service. The tragic events in Oklahoma City moved security in federal buildings to the top of the list forever. Our comprehensive response to the threat of terrorism includes new standards for design and construction, new security systems and protocols, and greater attention to the challenges of instituting security measures while still retaining the esthetics of federal workplaces.

The essential challenge is to be safe without compromising design quality and creating an oppressive climate of fear for people entering and using these buildings. We remain committed to keeping our public buildings open to the public. We continue to refine our standards for stricter security at federal buildings to ensure the safety of federal workers and visitors.

Improved security along our vulnerable building perimter areas doesn’t have to mean
buildings surrounded by unsightly vehicle bollards and lobbies cluttered with security processing equipment. For example, at the Federal Triangle in Washington, D.C., we have a new master plan that attractively integrates security features such as vehicle barriers into the redesigned landscaping.

Our First Impressions program streamlines the design of security devices and other equipment to keep our lobbies attractive. Our new Facilities Design Standards encourage keeping our most elaborate and gracious entrance lobbies accessible to the public by placing security processing functions in ancillary spaces adjoining entrance lobbies. This approach also allows us to better control circulation at our entrances.

As GSA faces more complex security challenges, we will still continue to create opportunities for members of the public to enjoy their public buildings. For example, the Great Hall of the Pension Building, which now houses the National Building Museum, provides an unforgettable setting for public ceremonies and events.

A Call for Guidance

And now, this is where you come in. As we strive to be worthy stewards of our historic inventory and continue the federal legacy of building public landmarks, GSA will be turning to you for help. We will look to you to encourage our client agencies to locate in historic buildings and reinvest in historic urban areas, and to help us identify historic buildings that can accommodate the space requirements of our federal clients.

We will look to you to share your expertise and experience to help us solve difficult program and design challenges, and to help us find reliable stewards for historic buildings that are no longer needed by the federal government.

We will look to you to help us use every available authority to put historic buildings to use while investing taxpayer funds prudently and living within our means. And we’ll look to you to have faith in us and trust in our commitment to stewardship.

We invite you to collaborate with us in preserving the federal legacy of the past as we build the federal legacy of the future.

Joe Moravec is the commissioner of Public Buildings Service for the U.S. General Services Administration.
I was asked to talk about preservation advocacy—and I love this topic because I’ve been an advocate throughout most of my professional career. I’ve learned that the job of an advocate is to be the raspberry seed under the upper palette. That’s the job of those of us who want to make sure that America’s treasures are around 100 years from now.

For some, the two words “preservation” and “advocacy” don’t go together. Preservation has—for far too long—been viewed as something high-minded, maybe elitist. It’s been associated with dirty words like gentrification. Or it was associated with people trying to prop up a little old farmhouse that was far beyond saving.

Either way preservation wasn’t a word that evoked much response in most people’s minds. In fact, it still isn’t a word that inspires. For example, recently, I attended a meeting of local officials discussing whether or not Rhode Island could pass a community preservation act like the one in Massachusetts. The advice given by the local officials was that we’d get nowhere if the term “historic preservation” was used. A better term, they said, would be community redevelopment. This was in the year 2001, in Rhode Island!

Then there’s the word advocacy. 

Whoa… that’s a word that gets people’s attention. Rabble-rousing, troublemaking, agitation.

The people who did preservation were afraid the neighborhood would go down the drain if the advocacy types got into the act. And the advocacy types were ready to bring down the neighborhood if that was what it took to get people’s attention.

So here we have what has traditionally been the great divide in the world of historic preservation—the veritable feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys. What are you, a Hatfield or a McCoy? I’d like to suggest that there is a middle way… a McHatfield alternative.
Let me give you a few examples from my experiences as an environmental activist, which is how I’ve spent most of my career.

Open space protection: This story goes back to the mid- to late-1990s when I served as the secretary of environmental affairs in Massachusetts. Can you imagine bringing the Sierra Club together with the National Rifle Association? We just about did that when we forged a coalition of big-bore heavy metal hunting rifle types with the greenest environmentalists in Massachusetts politics.

We called the coalition “Guns and Roses.” Not very creative, I’ll admit, but it worked. Most importantly, we united park leaders, farmers, water quality activists, and more and we managed to get a $400 million bond bill passed by the legislature. We protected 100,000 acres of land in just over five years. In fact, we protected more land in those five years than had been protected in the previous 100. We achieved a goal that many people thought was impossible.

Here’s another example: Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island has gone from being one of the dirtiest marine resources in New England to being one of the cleanest. It’s on its way to being saved. And cleaning up the bay has resulted in redefining and redeveloping Providence as a waterfront city with historic amenities along the river. It’s unbelievable to think that 20 years ago, anything and everything from our toilets landed in Narragansett Bay and the Providence River. That’s the same river where we celebrated the WaterFire event as part of this conference.

Again, we achieved a goal that most said was unachievable.

One final example is clean cars for America. This is an extremely important historic preservation issue because air pollution can do harm to our historic buildings. There were skeptics everywhere. They all said that the automobile industry couldn’t come up with alternative and new technologies. The brainpower wasn’t there. The will wasn’t there. Yet today there are hybrid vehicles on the market—some electric, some cng (compressed natural gas), some a combination. They are affordable and they’re so popular that you’ve got to be on a six-month-long waiting list to get one. These are great city cars—they’re quiet and they’re non-polluting, which helps protect our historic structures against the effects of air pollution.

Many people thought that this battle couldn’t be won, but we won it.

So what are the elements that make a campaign successful? I call these the “six C’s”:

Clear goals, Coalition building, Commitment, Courage, Creativity, and Celebration.

The First “C”—Clear Goals

When we announced the goal of protecting 100,000 acres in Massachusetts, many laughed out loud. Or they just chuckled politely. There was no doubt that the goal was an ambitious one. But it was a clear goal.

The critics came up with everything. They said that it focused too much on quantity versus quality. They said that the very act of buying or protecting that much land would drive up prices to the point where the state couldn’t afford it or shouldn’t pay for it. People came out of the woodwork to say it couldn’t be done.

And that’s when we knew we had a winner, because it was understandable enough for everyone to take potshots at it. The goals were clear.

You’ve heard this from
Harvard Business School: You can’t manage something you can’t measure. Successful advocacy takes good management, and good management means some sort of measurement. Clear goals give you that.

The Second “C”—Coalition Building

The Guns and Roses coalition supported land protection in Massachusetts. And they won the battle.

The clean up of Narragansett Bay brought together a most unusual collaboration, each faction of which had its own reason for supporting the clean up. There were labor leaders who saw jobs in building much-needed sewage facilities. There were shell fishermen who longed for the bay to be reopened again. There were environmentalists who, rightly so, advocated for clean water. There were politicians who joined the fray because their constituents were complaining about the problem. With this unusual coalition, we won the battle.

Each new battle potentially generates new allies, even sometimes people who were enemies in the past. So it’s important to always be open to reach out to whoever can be of help.

The Third “C”—Commitment

This reminds me of a poem by Helen Keller:

I’m only one, but I am one. I can’t do everything, but I can do something. That which I can do, I ought to do. That which I ought to do, by God’s grace I will.

Think of the dozens of people you have known or heard about who have been able to do extraordinary things because of their commitment. People who were only one. People who paid attention to doing what they could do. Antoinette Downing in Providence, Catherine Warren and Doris Duke in Newport—their commitment guaranteed that the Rhode Island of decades ago is a Rhode Island you can enjoy today.

The Fourth “C”—Courage

On all the big issues that I’ve won, courage was the one essential characteristic. At the beginning of the effort to save the Narragansett Bay there were many critics. Economists from the University of Rhode Island said that the best use of the bay was as a sewer. Business people agreed.

On the clean air issue, we were up against the likes of the American Association of Automobile Manufacturers, with big-name attorneys, big-name executives. Guts got us through.

When the auto industry, the EPA, many state environmental leaders, and others had joined forces to say that cleaner cars were improbable, it would have been easy to throw in the towel were it not for people like Governors Weld and Pataki who both believed that there was a way for the auto industry to do better.

We had confidence in our facts. And that confidence gave us the courage to rely upon our knowledge. Perhaps you can’t do everything, but what you can do, as an advocate, is to do your homework and then stick to your guns.
The Fifth “C”—Creativity
We need legions of people standing behind us to help carry our messages forward. So we must find ways to keep them actively engaged. And times are tough for this given the fact that:

- 40 percent of the public admits to being bored with their lives
- Most Americans spend four hours a day in front of the TV
- We have fewer dinner parties for our friends
- We go on fewer picnics with our families
- We rarely have a meal at home with our families

So we’ve got to find fun and compelling ways to motivate people to want to be part of the historic preservation and environmental protection movements.

We need legions of people standing behind us to help carry our messages forward. So we must find ways to keep them actively engaged.

The Sixth “C”—Celebration
We need to find time to celebrate our victories. This year a bill was signed in Rhode Island that will provide a 30 percent commercial tax credit to carry out historic preservation and open space protection. And that deserves lots of celebration.

The concept of reclaiming and cleaning up brownfields has become understandable and commonplace. That, too, deserves celebration.

Take time to raise a glass and make a toast, and to pat ourselves on the back.

And One More
Oh, there is an additional “C” and that is cash. Great organizations like Preservation Action and the National Trust can’t survive on goodwill alone. They need cash to pay the bills, hire the staff, and keep us informed. So we must adopt a view that says “fundraising is fun,” and wake each morning with an idea on how to implement that credo.

And why is all this important?
If you care that our landscapes are protected,
If you care that the air is clean, and that our water is healthy,
If you care about beauty,
If you care about the past and believe that the past can guide us into the future,
If you care about stopping sprawl and helping recreate urban environments that are vibrant,
If you care about a spirit of place,
...then the “six C’s” are important tools to help you accomplish your goals. Because everyone in this room can do something to make our communities better—even if you are only one.

Trudy Coxe is chief executive officer of the Preservation Society of Newport County (Newport Mansions).
Stewardship is a sacred obligation, and for most of you a profession, a career. But each of us has that sacred obligation to be stewards of a place.

No place, any place, some place, my place—I am obsessed with the word “place.” Once it seemed to me an innocuous sort of word, uninspired, passive, devoid of passion. But now place is a word with subtleties of meaning, nuances of intent and emotion. Perhaps I thought place was a dull, undistinguished word because I understood places as disembodied, existing outside of the people who live in them, just there. Are places without people like trees crashing in empty forests? I thought that places existed even without witnesses like unseen and unheard falling trees. But now I understand that humans create places, and that until we live in them, bury our dead beneath them, empty our tears upon them, name and remember them, and weave our stories in and through them, they do not exist. To name a place defines a relationship as surely as falling in love. We are the story weavers, the name givers, the place makers.

Places are made of earth and earth reshaped, transformed by hands into human homes. Nothing is foreign here. Human hands and feet are not alien to the earth but rather they are as intrinsic to the earth and the universe as grains of sand and black holes. Human hands and the earth are all made of atoms, molecules, arranged into distinct places: towns, cities, neighborhoods, houses, parks, fields, streets, highways, farms, factories, resorts, malls, airports—and the corner of Prather and Nottingham in front of my brick house with its garden of golden zinnias, flashy azaleas, and brilliant roses.

We are namers: New York, New Mexico, Providence, St. Louis, the Jefferson Memorial Building in a park we named Forest Park, streets we call Nottingham, Devonshire, Prather, where at 4700 is
my home. And my children were baptized Robyn and Adam, and the cat is Tigger. I have named my world or claimed my ownership of names made by others. Without names my world cannot exist. Names are the foundation of language. I string words together in my efforts to explain my world. I make my own story of the world, a very particular story. My story making is incubated by experience and memory, always set in the place that frames my story, defines its boundaries and gives me shape and context, just as a frame enfolds a painting, or as a glass holds water. Story defines each of us. And places become the mnemonic devices of our stories.

The Lure of Home

Humans are inseparable from place. As long as we have three-dimensional bodies we must be someplace on this earth. Place is our life support system and our respirator. Listen to Charlesetta Coleman describe her attachment to her home in one of St. Louis’s historically African-American neighborhoods:

“...we had moved so much when I was little...And when my mother, when we moved here the house was brand new, practically ...And I just put too much of my life in the place, too much money. To me it’s just that I just could not stand to go any place else now, and at my age, and I just don’t intend to move. Unless something drastically happened of some sort and I would have to move, you know. But I just spent my sweat and blood has been out there in that yard. I’ve laid bricks, circular bricks when my mother was living. We just worked ourselves, you know; this was our home. And...I’ve invested too much into my house; it’s just a white elephant but it’s mine.”

[Interview with Charlesetta Coleman, June 1999, Missouri Historical Society Archives]

For me there is one historic site that looms sweetly, but sorrowfully. The house on the hill in Ishpeming, Mich., was cream colored when my memories of it begin. My parents moved to the house two years before I was born. My older brothers and sister remember other houses before the house at 551 South Pine Street, but I don’t. I spent my whole childhood and adolescence in the house. Later we painted it barn red, beginning with a sample slash of paint under the kitchen window. Part of me is always there in that barn red paint, in the first whiff of moldy autumn leaves, in the boyhood scrap lumber and tar-papered shack on the hillside and in the garden where I pulled green onions, stripped off the earthy outer layers, and then ate them, or plucked purplish red raspberries from their thorny bushes and stuffed them in my mouth.

For the fortunate young, home is a haven from which one ventures inside and out to find the world for the first time. There is nonetheless a primeval attraction for all of us to those places where we first tasted the world. Home is where we first worded our world, where our memory began. When I was a small boy I accidentally moved too close to the wall grate of the heater in the second-floor bathroom. The red hot grate was at stomach height. I walked into it,
and it seared a hatched pattern into my abdomen. I can still see its faint outlines, a symbolic reminder for me of how indelible my first place is upon my mind and how comprehensively it is my point of reference for every new place I go and every thought I have.

Ishpeming was an iron-mining town where most of the men descended down underground shafts, three shifts each day, to the cavernous tunneled diggings with carbide lamps affixed to their helmets. One of the mines was called the Lake Angeline, and it was down the hill from my home. A few weeks ago a friend brought me a piece of puddled iron from this mine—rusty, spindly, in the elongated shape it assumed when it poured out as molten metal. It is a reminder of my historic site and reminds me each day of where home is and where I come from. I return home with that piece of iron, if only in my memory, to remember who I am and even sometimes to try to find out. My attraction to this place is not rational, but it is real and it is urgent.

Do not try to understand home. The longing to return is as deeply imbedded in us as the salmon swimming upstream or buffalo seeking the prairie, as Teresa Jordan describes in “Playing God on the Lawns of the Lord.”

A few days before the official release, the bison had been trucked to a holding pen on the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve so they could acclimate before being set free. Minutes after being unloaded, several of them found old wallows, depressions in the ground hollowed out by their ancestors when they had rolled to rub off flies or shed their winter coats. No creatures had used the wallows for at least a hundred and fifty years, but the newcomers, fresh off the truck, instinct-
tively made for the depressions and started rolling. It was as if both the animals and the land remembered.


Memory and Sense of Connection

But human memory is transferable both in oral and in documentary form and hence the piecemeal experience and memories of countless generations are projected into the present. Memory is contained in the shape of buildings, streets, landscapes, manuscripts, photographs, objects, in the entire shape of things reworked by human hands, and in habits of the heart passed on in families and communities—in traditions, quilts, recipes, lilts of the tongue, and in the values we hold dear. We are surrounded by messages from the past and we use these whisperings and shouts of those gone before to understand our present. Our world is full of mnemonic devices, and they can extend memories back in time.

To the left of my office desk is a framed birds-eye view of Negaunee, another small iron mining town near my hometown, where my grandparents lived and where my father was born. The view is long before my time, or even my father’s, but in it I recognize bluffs, the lake, the criss-cross of streets, and names that confirm it as the same place I knew. My memory reaches into the past and the birds-eye view projects forward those features that intersect with my memory of Negaunee that now extends back to 1871, the date of the old picture. But the picture only extends my memory because the memory of my own experience of the place supplies the context, the hitching post, the point of intersection. Without my own memory the view would have no personal significance. People connect with the past when their own memories contain the contexts that provide points of intersection.

Author Wendell Berry poetically expresses the depth of attachment of humans for place as a consequence of memory and history in his book, The Long-Legged House. He writes:

_In this awakening there has been a good deal of pain. When I lived in other places I looked on their evils with the curious eye of a traveler; I was not responsible for them; it cost me nothing to be a critic for I had not been there._
long, and I did not feel that I would stay. But here, now that I am both native and citizen, there is no immunity to what is wrong. It is impossible to escape the sense that I am involved in history. What I am has been to a considerable extent determined by what my forebears were, by how they chose to treat this place while they lived in it; the lives of most of them diminished it, and limited its possibilities, and narrowed its future. And every day I am confronted by the question of what inheritance I will leave.


I am entranced with these relationships between people and place. I sense that the intertwining of the two is so intimate as to be inseparable. Our relationship with a place is so profound a piece of our fabric and so ingrained into how we function that it is difficult to analyze it with any perspective. Yet in some real respects recognition of the relationship may be crucial to our very survival, for survival of humanity depends on places capable of sustaining us. Only when we animate our understanding of our dependence upon place can we, like Wendell Berry, assume responsibility for the welfare of the place and all the life that it sustains. It is not just our relationship to landscape and built environment that is incubated in
places of memory; it is also our relationships with each other.

Ritual and Place

New Mexico was once on the far northern frontier of New Spain, later Mexico. For hundreds of years Spanish-speaking people lived in those mountains north of Santa Fe in complete isolation, developing what seemed to outsiders to be strange cultural traditions.

In 1975 David Ortega from Chimayo invited me to attend a Penitente “Tinieblas” ceremony in the small mountain town of Truchas. On a sunny Good Friday afternoon I headed north from Albuquerque, up La Bajada hill to Santa Fe and then on the twisted high road to Taos. I passed pilgrims on the steep hill carrying crosses to the healing well of the Sanctuario de Chimayo. I joined David in Chimayo and at dark drove farther up the winding road to Truchas.

Those mountains have a special brooding quality and for me the trip north on the high road was always a journey back in time to a mysterious place. It seemed a landscape animated by the beliefs and history of the people who lived in it, imbued with a spiritual presence and blended with the smells of brisk mountain air and burning piñon.

The Penitentes are a lay brotherhood driven underground in the last century by the more orthodox Catholicism brought by the American bishops and the Anglo gawkers who sensationalized the sometimes bloody rituals of the brothers. The Penitentes also were a community mutual aid organization who ministered to the needs of their neighbors, caring for the sick, the hungry, and those down on their luck.

As an Anglo and an outsider I was honored at the invitation to participate in a centuries-old ritual preserved here in this small mountain village. It is not appropriate for me to describe the evening’s rituals but I do want to explain the sense I made of what I witnessed. The ritual, the ancient chants and music played on wooden flutes, rattles, and matracas (a type of percussion instrument) in the chilled spring darkness with moon-lit mountains as backdrop seemed to rise organically from the place. What happened that evening had antecedents in other places: medieval Spain from which the ancestors of these people came with admixtures of cultures encountered by these same ancestors in 17th-century Mexico before their immigration north.

But the rituals now belonged to Truchas, to this place, nowhere else. The place merged into a singularity; the people and the land were mirror images of each other. These people built the homes, chapels, and outbuildings of adobe, the earth of the place. Buildings grew here in the same way that gardens grew, through the cultivation by human hands. To the extent that rituals from the past are reenacted in the present, time is made irrelevant. In Truchas, history was present.

As I recall that evening in Truchas I am struck now by the lack of any sense of individual people, mental images of particular buildings, of individual mountain peaks, or even of the music or the sweet
pungent smell of piñon smoke. All elements of the experience have blended into a delicious and inseparable whole. After more than 300 years the land, the people, and the Good Friday rituals coexisted in a state of symbiosis in which all the pieces of the people and the place supported one another in a precisely balanced angle of repose. No element could be removed or altered without upsetting the balance of the remaining pieces. No one building in Truchas can be preserved as a historic site because taken out of the context any one element distorts the meaning of the place.

Fascination with the Past

Of course Truchas is a historic site, as is every place, because really every place on the earth is just as historic as every other place. All places on the same planet are made of materials that were already present when the planet’s surface first solidified. The contours of the earth have changed and humans have modified the planet in diverse ways to meet their needs. Civilizations, cities, and people have come and gone. In some instances evidences remain obvious. And in other cases we purposefully seek out and preserve pieces of the past, a process that most of you know well in the preservation of homes, farms, factories, streetscapes, monuments, and sometimes whole communities and neighborhoods.

When the originals do not exist we assemble whatever evidence we can find and recreate them. In still other instances we ignore accuracy and rearrange historic structures in places where they never stood and in relationships to each other that never existed. We decorate our restaurants with memorabilia and erect theme parks loosely based on the history of our nation. There is not a sharp line dividing what is accurately and inaccurately preserved and presented. It’s just gradations and scale.

Why our fascination with representations of the past? Some might argue that we preserve pieces of the past as testimony to our progress, illustrations of how far we have come and how superior we are to those who went before. Those who seek that kind of affirmation in the past miss the point. I recall an elderly friend surveying the 20th century from the perspective of 98 years. I asked her what she thought of all the progress she had witnessed. “It’s not progress,” she said, “it’s just change.”

Managing the Pace of Change

I think that our fascination as a nation with preservation of the past runs deeper. People who live in Truchas thought little about change and preservation. Why worry about preservation of abandoned adobes when so little changes and when the cycle of replacement is in itself an element of continuity? Why worry about preservation when the past persists in the present? Why worry where what is important never changes?

When I survey my hometown or my adopted home, St. Louis, I see whole neighborhoods and downtowns radically rearranged, abandoned, demolished, and neglected while new stores and subdivisions pop up on the margins. And in the midst of such wrenching change, I find preservation of reminders, which seems to me a form of protest against the destruction of places that once enfolded the memories of those who lived and worked in them. As if to underscore the futility and profound loss, there are “ghost reunions” in St. Louis, gatherings of people who once were
neighbors but are now dispersed in suburban developments. These people gather, if only for an evening or weekend, in a highway hotel or public park. It’s a poignant, forlorn form of preservation.

At the pinnacle of historic preservation in our nation are sites preserved to commemorate influential events and great people. But there are relatively few such sites, and they are not the core of the most fundamental value of preservation. I think that the preservation battle cry in our communities is this: Change that is too rapid disorients humans. Escalating rates of change deprive people of the referents and confirmations of their own memories. People’s identities are corroded, bonds of community are severed, environments are damaged, and suspicion replaces the mutual trust upon which democracy depends. We must become advocates for rates of change that do not cause wholesale obliteration of places of memory. How can we care about places that are interchangeable, homogenous, transient, and disposable? Places that conserve memory are good places for people and incubators of community, but they are also inherently oriented toward preservation because they emphasize reuse of what is old and eschew new development that too rapidly consumes increasingly scarce resources.

Let us slow down. Let us really live in our places and become advocates for their conservation to preserve our own sanity, protect a sense of context and continuity for our own lives, and be good stewards of those resources that are really the property of those who will follow us. Let us not blindly oppose what is new, but instead look for a pace and quality of change that respects the fundamental human need to remember. Let us acknowledge that all of us need places of remembrance and that we need to stay in place long enough to embed memories, for only then can we truly be at home. May we all remember that our most sacred obligation is to care for our places and exercise good stewardship so we will be reminded of where we came from and sometimes even discover who we are.

“Home is where we first worded our world, where our memory began.”
The author’s birthplace, the iron mining town of Ishpeming on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.
From a postcard in the author’s private collection

Robert R. Archibald, Ph.D., is president of the Missouri Historical Society.
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1) Publication title: Forum Journal: The Journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
2) Publication no.: 001-715
3) Date of filing: October 4, 2001
4) Issue frequency: Quarterly
5) No. of issues published annually: 4
6) Annual subscription price: $115.00
7) Complete mailing address of known office of publication: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036
8) Complete mailing address of headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036
9) Full names and addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; Editor: Elizabeth Byrd Wood, same address
10) Owner: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036
11) Known bondholders: None
12) The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: has not changed during the preceding 12 months
13) Publication name: Forum Journal: The Journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
14) Issue date for circulation data below: Winter 2002
15) Extent and nature of circulation: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 5,000. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 5,000
   a. Paid and/or requested circulation
      (1) sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: 75; 75
      (2) Paid and/or requested mail subscriptions: 3,908; 3,907
      c. Total paid and/or requested circulation: 3,983; 3,982
      d. Free distribution by mail: 250; 230
      e. Free distribution outside the mail: 0; 0
      f. Total free distribution: 250; 230
      g. Total distribution: 4,233; 4,212
      h. Copies not distributed: (1) Office use, leftovers, spoiled: 867; 788
         (2) Return from news agent: 0; 0
      i. Total: 5,100; 5,000
      Percent paid and/or requested circulation: 94%; 95%
16) This statement of ownership will be printed in the Winter 2002 issue of this publication
17) I certify that all information furnished above is true and complete.
   Bruce Yarnall, Business Manager