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# To Document and Persuade: The American Preservation Movement and Its Use of Motion Pictures, 1952-1995

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## **Disciplines**

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TO DOCUMENT AND PERSUADE:  
THE AMERICAN PRESERVATION MOVEMENT  
AND ITS USE OF MOTION PICTURES, 1952-1995.

Michael Raymond Cabana

A THESIS

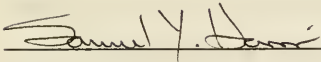
in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

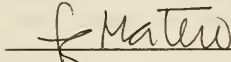
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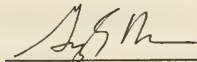
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## INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1991, a quarter century after the enactment of the Preservation Act of 1966, historic preservationists and allied professionals gathered in St. Louis for their annual conference. In part, they were there to assess the progress made by the preservationists in advancing the cause of historic preservation over the last quarter century and to chart the course for the future. While preservationists were able to articulate a multitude of successes, many expressed concern that the values which formed the core of the preservation ethos had failed to reach the public at large. Indeed, although notable progress had been made within governmental and bureaucratic circles at both the state and federal levels, the preservation movement had clearly failed to capture a mainstream constituency and remained a marginalized cause. Yet, during approximately the same period of time, the environmental movement had achieved mainstream public awareness, if not complete support. The environmental movement, it is true, could claim that life itself hung in the balance if its concerns were not addressed and was therefore better able to, at least initially, garner public attention with their compelling message. But preservationists, whose primary concern was the built



environment--which shared a symbiotic relationship with the larger natural environment--should have been able to grasp a far larger constituency than they had. It is, in part, my thesis that preservationists have failed to garner a larger national constituency because they have failed to persuade the larger public of the validity and nature of their cause. Why they did not, I contend, was and is fundamentally, although not entirely, a problem of communication.

The following thesis will analyze this problem of communication. Preservation, as some preservationist scholars have suggested, has failed to clearly articulate and disseminate its purposes to the majority of the public, upon whom it depends upon for support. This failure, I believe, can be traced to several causes. First, there is a lack of consensus within the preservation movement itself about its message or messages, because, in part, there is a lack of consensus about its greater purposes. The ever-shifting nature of preservation rhetoric has left many people--even among those who are aware of the movement--uncertain as to what, precisely, it is and what it stands for. Secondly, the preservation movement--despite rhetoric to the contrary--has resisted opening itself to a larger public. As evidenced by actions rather than words, preservationists and allied professionals have apparently not believed that public support was, in fact, a linchpin of the movement's success.



Finally, and most significantly for this discussion, such fundamental elitism has reinforced the movement's continuing reliance on text-based media as a means of institutional proselytizing and, more specifically, influenced its failure to exploit motion pictures effectively in outreach programs. The scholarly nature of history and the quirky antiquarian impulse which informed much early preservationist thinking has rendered it a primarily literary movement in an era when most people get information from motion picture-based media. The preservation movement continues to overlook the use of motion picture technology despite its ability to transmit information about architecture and the built environment, and despite communications research which indicates it is the most effective available tool of persuasion.

In Chapter One, I examine the relationship of motion pictures to architecture and explore the educational and analytical potential of these modalities. In Chapter Two, I discuss preservation rhetoric from the formalized inception of the movement in 1966 to the present and then examine the relationship of this rhetoric to the movement's efforts and means of persuasion, especially in the use of text combined with images. In the following two chapters, I review the history of motion pictures produced by and for the historic preservation community, analyzing a representative sample in



terms of style as well as rhetorical and persuasive content. In Chapter Five, I compare the communication strategy of the environmental movement to that of historic preservation to illustrate how effective motion picture art and technology can be in winning public "hearts and minds." In conclusion, I offer some suggestions as to how Historic Preservation can better utilize motion picture technologies as persuasive devices and illustrate that, as we immerse ourselves in the information age these technologies will only become more significant.

For preservation to take full advantage of burgeoning computer-based technologies, preservationists must analyze their past record with visual information technologies and they must recognize and alter any inherent print bias. It is the intent of this thesis to point out that the thoughtful utilization of motion picture media and a well-formulated media strategy can make the most of limited funds. Indeed, the motion picture arena is one where the needs of the allied professions of history, art history, architecture, landscape architecture and archeology to name a few can be served. A well-thought-out motion picture strategy could allow these various disciplines, many of whose interests intersect precisely at the field of historic preservation, to avoid duplication of services and make the most of limited budgets. This thesis will illustrate not only how such a strategy is





possible but will argue why it is imperative for preservation to grasp it as we enter the information age.



## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT MOTION PICTURES BRING TO THE TABLE Motion Pictures and the Rendering of Space.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between architecture and the camera dates to the Renaissance. Indeed, the first camera was architecture; the camera obscura was both a room and an optical device which could capture images. This early wedding of the camera to architecture is a marriage which has endured to the present day. In particular, the technology and art of photography has contributed much to the process of architectural documentation.

This relationship between photography and the built environment did not come about, at least initially, because of some deep-seated need to document buildings. Rather, buildings were one of the few subjects motionless enough to accommodate the long exposure time required by early film emulsions to register a clear image. But antiquarians and historians soon saw a practical side to architectural

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this discussion two primary terms will be used which require some definition: still images and motion pictures. For the course of this thesis still images will refer to precisely that--images which do not move. This category will include prints, drawings and photographs, although our references will primarily be to photographs. Motion pictures will refer to images that move--a series of linked still images which offer a simulacrum of motion. This category will include films, videos, television, laser discs and computer recorded or generated motion pictures.



photography. By the mid-19th century, Europeans had recognized photography as a means to document examples of endangered architecture and to disseminate these images to a wider public.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, the Historic American Building Survey, founded in 1933, established photography as one of the primary modes of architectural documentation. HABS's motto "preservation through documentation" clearly linked the documentation process, in which photography figured prominently, to notions of historic preservation.

The relationship between photography and preservation is a complicated one, as is the idea of documentation. Preservation through documentation was (and still is, in most cases) preservation for the sake of record only. Since most of the buildings documented in the Historic American Building Survey are gone, only the **image** of the buildings and not their **corporeality** is preserved. We must consider then whether still photography is, in fact, the best means by which to document architectural space.

Jeff Dean, author of *Architectural Photography*, suggests that "the impressions and understandings that most lay people have of most architectural landmarks are obtained through the

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<sup>2</sup>For a more complete discussion of the history of architectural photography see Cervin Robinson and Joel Herschman's *Architecture Transformed: A History of the Photography of Buildings from 1839 to the Present*. (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1987) and Helmut Gernsheim, *Focus on Architecture and Sculpture: An Original Approach to the Photography of Architecture and Sculpture* (London: The Fountain Press, 1949)



intervening, two-dimensional medium of architectural photography."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Dean understates the case. The impression and understanding that **most** built-environment professionals have about architectural landmarks have been shaped largely by the study of images of buildings, rather than actual experience of the building in situ. It is unrealistic to expect that built-environment professionals visit every building of architectural interest in their own towns, let alone the entire United States and, ultimately, the world. So the dependence on photography as a means of communicating architectural information is, for better or for worse, an accepted limitation of built-environment study. Architectural photography, when combined with printing technology, "disseminates architectural information rapidly and widely," suggests Dean, "and helps society to appreciate fine architecture, whether historic or modern."

But in this same article Dean also points out that it would take an estimated "65,000 photographs to depict an ordinary building adequately."<sup>4</sup> Precisely what determines adequate documentation--at least in Dean's account--remains sketchy. Perhaps this estimate is exaggerated. Perhaps, too, this estimate implies a precision of documentation which left no building detail unaccounted for. But Dean's estimate does

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<sup>3</sup>Jeff Dean, "Photographing Historic Buildings" in *APT: The Bulletin of The Association for Preservation Technology*, Volume XIV No. 4, 1982, 31.

<sup>4</sup>Dean (1982) 6.





call into question the efficiency of photography as a tool of architectural documentation. How much space would be required to house 65,000 photographs or even the negatives of 65,000 photographs? While architects have embraced new technologies to improve structures and architectural conservators have employed highly technological solutions to restore structures one of the primary methods employed to document structures--the still photograph--remains an essentially 19th-century technology. Unfortunately, one of the best available technologies for documenting and exploring architectural space--the motion picture--is simply not used.

"The discovery of the motion picture camera, wrote Bruno Zevi in 1957, was of enormous importance in the representation of architectonic space...and it seems likely that in teaching the history of architecture, the use of [motion pictures], rather than of books, will greatly advance spatial education."<sup>5</sup> Yet almost 40 years later architectural historian Barry Bergdoll pointed out that both historians and architects have been resistant to employ motion pictures in their respective professions even though he concluded that

[motion pictures], more powerfully than any of the numerous forms of reproduction by which we can know, study and discuss architecture, landscape and urban space, can offer us such suggestive, and at

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<sup>5</sup>Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture*. Translated by Milton Gendel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957) 28



times provocative, ways of seeing and looking that we return to the monuments of architectural history themselves with a different eye."<sup>6</sup>

These two statements represent the paradoxical thinking which underscores the relationship of motion pictures and architecture. While built-environment professionals suggest that motion pictures can enhance understanding of the built environment these technologies remain underutilized. A multitude of articles propose that motion pictures offer the viewers, students, analysts and creators of architecture a tool which no other representational medium can match.<sup>7</sup> Yet, there has been little discussion about precisely what motion pictures bring to the subject of architecture and in what manner they can enhance our understanding of the built environment.

Diana Agrest asserted that architecture and motion pictures have a long history and points out that "architecture is an almost unavoidable element of [motion

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<sup>6</sup> Barry Bergdoll, "Altered States of Vision: Film, Video and the Teaching of Architectural History", in *Architecture on Screen: A Directory of Films and Videos*. edited by Nadine Covert. (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1993). xx

<sup>7</sup>For a full citation of these articles refer to the bibliography. The articles by B.J. Novitsky, Shant Agajanian and Barrie Christian deal with motions pictures as a design tool. Karen Cordes and Brian Orland discuss how motion pictures can help designers communicate the intricacies of design to non-designers. The work of C. Barrett Kennedy et al and Kurt Novak deal with issues of motion picture (in some cases with video, specifically) as a means of documentation.



pictures]...[ranging] from a mere background against which action takes place...to the other extreme, where architecture is almost the inspiring force behind the [motion picture]."<sup>8</sup> Motion pictures, Agrest suggests, are, like architecture itself, "a continuous series of spaces perceived through time." <sup>9</sup>

It is this relationship to time and space which proponents of motion pictures as an architectural documentation tool refer when discussing what these media offer built-environment professionals. Bruno Zevi pointed out that traditional methods of architectural representation (drawings and still photographs) typically attempt to represent three dimensions of an object from one perspective --a fixed vantage point. If that perspective is changed, however--if one moved ten feet to the right or left of the original vantage point, for example--a new representation of that object would be required to reflect the resultant changes in perspective. But, Zevi reasoned, perhaps building on the ideas of Sigfried Giedeon, the changes in perspective which the viewer would register as he moved to the new vantage point remained undescribed and unrepresented in these

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<sup>8</sup>Diana I Agrest, *Architecture From Without: Theoretical Framings for a Critical Practice*. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press. 1991). 129

<sup>9</sup>Agrest (1991), 130.



traditional documentational modes.<sup>10</sup> Zevi determined that "this successive displacement *in time*"--the alteration of perspective created by movement--added a "new dimension to the three dimensions of tradition [and thus] time was baptized the 'fourth dimension'."<sup>11</sup> Zevi argued that the fourth dimension, time, was indispensable to the appreciation and experience of architecture. No work of architecture could be understood, he posited, "without the time needed for our walk of discovery within it."<sup>12</sup> In architecture, Zevi theorized, it was the observer moving around and about a building or landscape, studying it from various points of view which created this fourth dimension. Zevi concluded that "properly applied [motion pictures] resolve almost all the problems posed by the fourth dimension."<sup>13</sup>

Edison's motion picture camera was hailed as the invention which would represent reality as it really was. Richard Barsam opined that the invention of motion pictures was "one of the great turning points in the history of the visual arts....Paintings and photographs", he asserted, "could only preserve a visual **memory** of movement....[The]

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<sup>10</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the relationship of time to the understanding of architecture see Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture; the Growth of a New Tradition*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.)

<sup>11</sup>Zevi (1957), 26.

<sup>12</sup>Zevi (1957), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Zevi (1957), 134.





single, static images are the **remembrance** of a moment in time and space." Barsam acknowledged the fact that motion pictures, too, represented memories but, he argued, "they also provide a visual equivalent of the present tense, a **representation of movement** itself."<sup>14</sup> Barsam suggested that, even if a motion picture represented a period of time which had passed, it nonetheless, represented a facsimile of a series of moments with a fidelity no still photograph could match. A photograph captures one particular moment and implies that it represents all time--the motion picture could offer the viewer time itself.

In addition to its superior ability to provide time-space information, the motion picture is also able to imply information about the world which lies just beyond the edges of the frame. Andre Bazin--borrowing a phrase from Leon-Battista Alberti, the Renaissance architect and theoretician--argued that the screen acts as a "mask or a window on the world."<sup>15</sup> But more than mere mask or frame, Jacques Aumont and Alain Bergala argued that the viewer responds to the motion picture image "as if we are seeing a portion of three

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<sup>14</sup> Richard M. Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History, Revised and Expanded*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 6

<sup>15</sup> Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 8



dimensional space analogous to real space."<sup>16</sup> They further argued that this analogy is perceived as strongly authentic and made manifest by the "illusion of movement and depth."<sup>17</sup> This combined illusion of movement and depth is precisely the aspect of motion pictures which renders them the ideal representational tool for architectural and built-environment subjects.

This impression of depth is, of course, not unique to motion pictures and is accomplished through two techniques which are common to all photographic media. The motion picture image achieves depth, as do photographs and post-Renaissance paintings, through the use of perspective, which creates an illusion of depth. Unlike painting and drawing, however, this foreshortening is not accomplished through a manipulative technique (illusory shadings, for example) but because of the interrelationship of the camera's optics--which simulates human vision--and the ability of the recording medium to register a tonal range which approximates reality. The resultant representation is "a partial illusion that permits the difference between our vision of the real and its representation to be accepted." <sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Jacques Aumont and Alain Bergala, Michel Marie, Marc Venet. *Aesthetics of Film*, Translated and Revised by Richard Neupert. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992) 19

<sup>17</sup>Aumont and Bergala (1992) 10

<sup>18</sup>Aumont and Bergala (1992) 19



There is one other aspect of motion picture technologies which is often ignored when discussing their applicability to the representation of the built environment. Why utilize **motion** pictures when the buildings themselves do not move? That this question is rarely addressed suggests that even visually attuned analysts of the built environment have not considered that still photographs offer little information about the interrelationship of architecture and light. Murray Grigor, a director who has produced a number of motion pictures about architecture, relates that he has had difficulty convincing financial backers of his motion pictures about the viability of architectural motion pictures. "Senior decision makers in the media have actually told me", he recounted, "that the very idea of making architectural films is doomed because 'buildings don't move'."<sup>19</sup> The erroneous notion that, because buildings are anchored to the earth, static photographs should adequately represent them is not limited to ill-informed media decision makers and, it underscores the fact that the way motion pictures attempt to reproduce reality remains minimally understood. Although it is true that buildings do not move, the principal creator of shadow--the sun and its generated light--does. Our perceptions of the spaces we view are

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<sup>19</sup> Murray Grigor, "Space in Time: Filming Architecture." in *Architecture on Screen: A Directory of Films and Videos*. edited by Nadine Covert. (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1993). xxviii



shaped, primarily, by the interaction between these spaces and light. Only motion pictures can reflect these subtle but critically important lighting changes with a modicum of accuracy. If these subtle--and sometimes not so subtle--changes in shading brought about by the movement of light does not seem a compelling enough reason to employ motion pictures as an analytical and documentation tool of architectural space there is another point to consider: even if buildings do not move we--the human observers--do. Bruno Zevi suggested why the still photograph could not quite capture this interplay between the building observed and its observer.

"[A still] photograph records a building statically and excludes the dynamic, almost musical, succession of points movingly experienced by the observer as he walks in and around the building...each photograph is like a single phrase taken out of the context of a symphony or poem...whatever the number of still photographs, there is no sense of dynamic motion.<sup>20</sup>

Zevi implies that the experience of architecture can be emotionally moving to the observer. He suggests that a visual dialogue takes place as the viewer registers the variety of views accorded to him as he moves about the building. It is precisely this ability of motion pictures to transmit information which can trigger emotional response

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<sup>20</sup> Zevi (1957) 57





that renders them a particularly powerful and persuasive visual tool.

Traditionally, as in the case of the HABS/HAER records for example, black and white still photographs have been the architectural documentation technology of choice. One frequently utilized argument in favor of the employment of this technology is predicated on the still photograph's capacity for definition; its ability to reveal the intricate detail of the three-dimensional surface.<sup>21</sup> Although this is a well-articulated argument and truthfully born out, high relief detail is merely **one** aspect of architectural information and, as Aumont and Bergala have argued, motion pictures reveal information which the still photograph cannot. While they agree that the resolution of the motion picture image is **not yet** as finely detailed as the still photograph, Aumont and Bergala argue that the existing quality of resolution--which is relatively high--combined

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<sup>21</sup>One additional rationale cited for the employment of still photographs as a documentation tool is the archival stability of black and white film. This thesis does not intend to ignore the importance of archival stability but arguments about the archival stability of motion picture recording media is not an aspect of this thesis. While the traditional recording media--motion picture film and videotape--have heretofore proven to be archivally less stable, the available digital recording media appear to offer a solution to this problem. While no one can state with certainty whether or not these media are as stable as photographic film, it hardly seems prudent to resist employing motion pictures until we are certain.



with the restitution of movement<sup>22</sup> "grants those [objects on which the camera is trained] a certain weight and volume which they would not have in a still photograph."<sup>23</sup> It is precisely this ability to create the illusion of weight--or, more aptly for discussions of architecture, mass--which renders the motion picture image a superior representational medium for an architectural subject.

The ability of the motion picture to render plausible realities need not stop at the building as object, however. The motion picture may also be employed to document--or represent a facsimile of--not only the built environment but the larger contextual landscape, as well. The motion picture image, as Aumont and Bergala point out, creates an analogy with real space. On-screen space is perceived by the viewer as part of an implied larger space and the authors conclude that there is no reason for a viewer to suspect that this

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<sup>22</sup>Restitution of movement occupies an important place in creating an impression of "plausible reality" according to Aumont. Motion picture technologies do not actually reveal true motion, rather they simulate motion through a series of rapidly projected still images. In the case of synchronous sound photographic film there are 24 discrete images per second, in video technologies there are 30 discrete images per second. This procession of rapidly projected still images permits certain psycho-physiological phenomena to take place which produces in the viewer an impression of continuous movement. One such phenomena - the phi phenomena- involves our perceptions of apparent movement in certain instances when there is no actual movement. Aumont argues, and I believe quite rightly, that the motion pictures reproduced or reconstituted movement is real movement since the visually perceived reconstituted movement is indistinguishable to the brain. See Aumont (1992)

<sup>23</sup>Aumont and Bergala (1992) 121



scenographic world stops at the image's edges. In addition, the ability to reposition the motion picture camera's point of view in real time - either by pivoting the camera on a tripod (the panning or tilting shot) or by completely repositioning the camera in space (the tracking or booming shot) allows the motion picture to establish spatial relationships which would require extensive verbal description or a multitude of still photographs to imply. These techniques which reveal spatial relationships can be combined through editing (montage) to create a reasonable facsimile of real places - a plausible landscape.

The motion picture's ability to create a plausible landscape is not lost on geographers. "The very heart of geography - the search for our sense of place and self in the world," wrote Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn, "is constituted by the fact of looking and is, in effect, a study of images."<sup>24</sup> With the exception of the blind, our sense of the world in which we live and move is created through a lifetime of primarily visual experiences. Place construction, geographer Jeff Hopkins reasoned, lies at the core of human geography and to approach motion pictures as landscapes is a logical point of entry because "landscapes...are first and foremost

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<sup>24</sup>Stuart C. Aitken and Leo F. Zonn, *Place, Power Situation and Spectacle, A Geography of Film*. (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994) 7



visual constructs."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Hopkins suggested, "through the blending of people and technology...[the motion picture], a two dimensional image of light and shadow...becomes an illusionary, three dimensional landscape."<sup>26</sup>

This link between the geography of motion pictures and the geography of our environment is a critical one for built-environment professionals and is especially important to architects and historic preservationists. If motion pictures, as Hopkins suggests, can create plausible geographies or places then they are able to provide information about places in a medium which can offer a simulacrum of the experience of the place. In addition, motion pictures would allow the historic preservationist to create--through the use of historic footage-- a plausible geography of the past.

Since the motion picture, through its rapid succession of static images, creates such convincing illusions of depth, volume and motion it can "create an environment where the boundaries between the real and the imaginary are blurred", opined Hopkins.<sup>27</sup> While Hopkins' point is well taken, it does not reveal the complexities involved in the creation of motion picture landscapes nor does it reveal the potential

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<sup>25</sup>Jeff Hopkins, "A Mapping of Cinematic Places: Icons, Ideology, and the Power of (Mis)representation" in Stuart C. Aitken and Leo F. Zonn, *Place, Power Situation and Spectacle, A Geography of Film* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994) 49

<sup>26</sup>Hopkins in (Aitkens and Zonn) (1994) 49

<sup>27</sup>Hopkins in (Aitkens and Zonn) (1994) 49





such creations hold for built-environment professionals. It is possible (as frequently seen in feature motion pictures) to create a motion picture landscape which, while constructed from images of real places is, nonetheless, no **actual** place. The plausible motion picture landscape begins with a series of images of real places. Through the process of editing and the exploitation of the viewer's understanding of motion picture grammar, the finished motion picture will imply spatial relationships which do not exist.<sup>28</sup> That we, as viewers accept this illusion in most narrative motion

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<sup>28</sup>Motion picture language and grammar, like spoken and written language is something that most people give little thought to. Like the grammar of spoken and written languages, there are rules which dictate, to some extent, how to structure motion picture communication. It is a means by which the directors and editors of motion pictures impose logic upon the narrative. For example, when an actor exits the screen to the left of frame we expect that he will re-enter from the right of frame. Consider the following as an illustration of the creation of a plausible motion picture landscape. We could have an actor run out of the Chrysler building, into a crush of people and exit screen left; the clock on the building reads 12 noon. We could then cut to a tight shot of the actor running toward us down a crowded New York sidewalk for three seconds. The next shot could be a rather wide shot of upper 5th Avenue—we see the actor burst from a crowded sidewalk, dash across the street—narrowly avoiding a collision with a New York City Cab—and sprint up the steps of the Metropolitan Museum. We cut to an interior of the Villard houses where our hero bursts in shouting "I've got to see the Mayor" only to be told the mayor just went to lunch. While this portrayal is slightly light-hearted, I believe it illustrates the point. We have implied that the Chrysler building is within a short run of the Met which we have suggested is actually City Hall. That is how film grammar is applied to create plausible landscapes. For more information on the language of motion pictures and the implications of motion picture grammars see Lewis Jacobs, *The Movies as Medium*, (New York: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 1970) or John Sayles, *Thinking in Pictures: The Making of the Movie Matewan*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).



pictures should convince us of their power to create plausible cinematic places.

Conversely, it is possible to present an equally plausible simulation of an actual place through a careful exploitation of motion picture grammar. Motion picture landscapes, whether they are captured on film or videotape or whether they are created via 3-D computer imaging, are not--nor should they ever be--acceptable substitutes for the experience of real places, just as a recording of a symphony performance is not a substitute for hearing and seeing an orchestra perform in the concert hall. But exposure to a variety of audio recordings of a particular piece of music, for example, can educate a listener and sensitize him to nuances of interpretation rendering him more able to appreciate the fine performance and discern the less successful one. In addition, just as an audio recording might encourage a listener to attend a performance, so too might a motion picture inspire a viewer to visit a place, stimulate their appreciation or provide a basis upon which to make critical comparisons. Even if, as is often true in the study of architectural history, a student never actually visits an iconic building, a series of images that offered an approximation of the physical space would be an improvement on the often acontextual single-viewpoint images to which



they are exposed; images which offer little information about mass, volume or scale.

Architectural historian Barry Bergdoll noted that "the interlocked experiences of time and place vital to the discovery and comprehension of buildings *in situ* are impossible to re-create in projected still images."<sup>29</sup> And he questioned whether motion pictures were the technology which most transparently rendered the reproduction of architecture in the classroom. Although Bergdoll was most concerned with the education of built-environment professionals, his arguments for and criticisms of motion picture technologies as an educational and analytical tool are applicable to concerns of the larger public, as well. Since motion pictures are, as many argue, capable of simulating architecture more convincingly than any other medium why, Bergdoll wondered, have architectural historians been loathe to trade in their still photographs and slide projectors? Bergdoll concluded that this reluctance was predicated, in part, on the perceived limitations of the frame of the motion picture image. Motion picture technologies have opted for a horizontally oriented screen. Motion picture images, he pointed out, cannot be oriented either horizontally or vertically as is possible with a still camera. Because of this limitation, he argued, the representation of tall

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<sup>29</sup>Bergdoll in Covert.(1993) xvi



buildings posed a problem.<sup>30</sup> And, perhaps more to the point, Bergdoll opined that a motion picture experience of a building or place was pre-selected by its director and cameraman - the observer was denied the delight of discovery and the instructor the role of guide. And so, he concluded, "the resistance to using motion pictures is...an unwillingness (on the part of instructors) to relinquish directorial control."<sup>31</sup> This unwillingness to relinquish control need not be seen as some evidence of megalomania but rather a recognition that the instructor could no longer control the flow and pace of the classroom. In addition, the instructor would be limited to the sequencing choices which the motion picture director has made.

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<sup>30</sup>Even Bergdoll, an advocate of motion pictures, reveals a certain aesthetic preference for the architectural photograph and worship of the building as object. Bergdoll's criticism hinged on his perception that the motion picture medium is unable to successfully translate the verticality of the skyscraper without resorting to "the ubiquitous panning shot." Bergdoll cited Berenice Abbott's famous images of skyscrapers as one example of how the problems of verticality can be better solved by photography. Abbott's extremely cropped images represented skyscrapers--as perhaps some of their creators might like to see them--as singular works of art rather than as shoehorned into a busy urban environment as they really are. No one can ever experience a skyscraper as Abbott presented them, unless they have some bizarre aberration of vision. Human vision, due to its peripheral nature, is decidedly more horizontal than vertical in orientation. Anyone who has walked through a vertically oriented city, such as New York or Chicago, will testify that only by tilting (not panning) ones head can one actually see all of a skyscraper from ground level. Through its ability to tilt up a building in real time, only the motion picture can accurately mimic the sensations which humans experience when confronted by architecture of extreme verticality.

<sup>31</sup>Bergdoll in Covert.(1993) xvii





But what if the instructor were able to control the pace and tempo and selection of images themselves? Would it ameliorate some of the existing resistance to the employment of motion picture technology if built-environment professionals could envision themselves as collaborators -- co-directors? This thesis cannot answer such questions but it can point out that the technology for storing flexible motion picture images is currently available and will rapidly become more affordable.<sup>32</sup> "Quick time" motion picture and "non-linear" assemblage exists in available computer software and the most sophisticated of these programs are currently utilized by motion picture professionals. If the past history of technologies holds true it will be less than a decade or so before they are inexpensively available for the mass market. One need only reflect that the computations made by the huge and expensive ENIAC computer were within twenty-five years performed by inexpensive, wafer size calculators one could purchase in the supermarket checkout line.

One example of the potential of computer-based technologies for built-environment application was a project known as *The Aspen Movie Map* completed in 1979 by the Architecture Machine Group at M.I.T.'s Media Laboratories.

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<sup>32</sup>This computer based technology is called "non-linear editing". Images are scanned into a computer and stored on a hard disk. The "editor" chooses which images he would like to see and creates a "list". The computer will then "instantly access the information and make it available as a viewable sequence.



The streets and buildings of Aspen, Colorado were scanned onto a videodisk and coordinated to grid maps so that it was possible to tour the town via visual images. "Aspen wasn't a travelogue," recalled a participant, "it was the town. It let you drive through the place yourself....Many buildings you could go into...[and] you could see historical pictures of the building."<sup>33</sup> The Aspen project revealed what computers and videodisks could do and, more importantly to instructors, it revealed "how unauthored a creative work could become." As one member of the group put it, "we tried to envision architecture without architects."<sup>34</sup>

This notion of "architecture without architects" was not a nefarious plot to rid the world of the architectural profession. Rather, it was an attempt to create a computer program which allowed people who had knowledge but limited skills, to explore topics in which the computer acted as neutral intermediary. The Architectural Machine Group explored this concept of "architecture without architects" in a variety of applications including the creation of motion pictures or--"films without directors." While much of this work was--and still is--highly theoretical, it offered a vision of where technology could lead and the potential it offered. And built-environment instructors needn't fear that

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<sup>33</sup>Stewart Brand, *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at M.I.T.*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1988). 141

<sup>34</sup>Brand (1988). 141



such advanced computer-based motion pictures will create an "education without teachers." For as Bruno Zevi pointed out in 1957,

a [motion picture] can represent one or two or three possible paths the observer may take through the space of a building, but the space in actuality is grasped through an infinite number of paths... Not even motion pictures...possess that main spring of complete and voluntary participation, that consciousness of free movement, which we feel in the direct experience of space.<sup>35</sup>

From 1987 to 1990, the Program for Art on Film, a joint venture of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Trust, explored the potential for motion pictures as an art educational tool and encouraged the collaboration of motion picture professionals and art historians. Of the roughly 14 motion pictures produced by the workshop, 5 focused specifically on architecture. The Production Laboratory was conceived as an experimental setting where the relationship between art and motion pictures could be explored. The motion pictures about architecture are, as one might expect, a bit self-conscious, a bit pretentious and a bit "arty". To be fair, the goal of the series was not to **define** a formula for making a successful film on art but merely to explore the potential of the medium and the

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<sup>35</sup>Zevi (1957).59-60 Of course Zevi, writing in 1957, could not have envisioned the invention of virtual reality simulations.



collaborative process. The works produced do not mark a precise direction for built-environment motion pictures nor should any of them serve as a benchmark for how architecture can or should be presented. What is promising about this experiment, however, is the collaborative nature of the works produced by the motion picture and built-environment professionals.

The collaborations revealed, among other things, some of the difficulties which some built-environment professionals had communicating with motion pictures. In some cases, the difficulties lay in assimilating the conceptual language of motion picture production or, what motion picture director John Sayles calls "thinking in pictures". This concept of thinking in pictures reveals a critical aspect about motion picture assemblage. Motion pictures have their own language, grammar and syntax and for people whose primary communication mode is textual this transition can prove to be daunting. "[Motion pictures] offer unique expressive powers," wrote one participant, "but for an art historian, the written word is a primary tool. This can be a serious stumbling block...words are a useful tool in [motion pictures] but only one tool among many."<sup>36</sup> Nor was the task of conveying art-historical information in motion pictures easy for the motion picture

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<sup>36</sup>Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art*, The Program For Art on Film: A Joint Venture of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Trust. (New York, 1992).11





professionals to grasp. Still, the discussions on process which the collaborators shared raised a number of points which can be utilized to establish a conceptual framework for future motion picture collaboration.<sup>37</sup>

If motion pictures are to convey experiential visual information--how a space or object appears and feels--as well as textual and historical information, they must follow certain guidelines. Motion pictures have been criticized as incapable of imparting a depth of information, for example. However, the participants in the *Art on Film* project determined that "conveying hard information...and intellectual rigor [was] possible [within the motion picture context. But the motion picture] must give us more than a message; it must assert itself as an experience."<sup>38</sup> The motion picture must engage the viewer while still maintaining strict standards of scholarship. The motion picture, the participants determined, should not become a mere handmaiden to information: it had to be more than just an illustrated lecture. The motion picture had to function on its own as a moving, pictorial narrative. The participants thought that motion pictures about art and architecture could successfully engage the viewer in a discovery of the spaces they explored. But, as one panelist cautioned, the motion picture producer

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<sup>37</sup>For a complete discussion of these guidelines refer to Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) page 85.

<sup>38</sup> Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) 27



had to resist getting "caught up in his own world of cuts, technique, how this [motion picture was] fitting into filmmaking...instead of [making] a film about [architecture]." <sup>39</sup> Despite such criticism, participants concluded that it was possible to "find an approach which [did] justice to the language of motion pictures and of art." <sup>40</sup>

That motion pictures have the potential to offer a sense of architectural space in a compelling manner does not mean the process is a simple one. "One of the biggest challenges ...with representing architecture on screen is how to convey a sense of scale," commented motion picture director Erin Velez. Another problematic issue with the representation of architectural space in motion picture format was orientation: where are we in the structure and how did we get there? But, these are surmountable problems which serious discussion between motion picture and built-environment professionals can remedy.

Although the motion picture professionals understood the process of motion picture production they did not always understand concepts critical to the analysis of architectural space. Nadine Descendre collaborated with architectural historian Barry Bergdoll to produce the motion picture *Sainte*

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<sup>39</sup> Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) 42

<sup>40</sup>Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) 43



*Genevieve, the Pantheon of the Domes*. Descendre pointed out the problems posed by her limited architectural understanding and underscored the importance of collaboration. "If I had made the film alone," she stated, "maybe it would have been the same from a cinematographic point of view, but concerning the message about the architecture itself, I would have ruined the building."<sup>41</sup> For motion pictures to be completely successful in the service of the built environment, built-environment professionals--architects, planners, historians and preservationists--must welcome the motion picture professionals into their fold and extend themselves to include motion pictures in the existing arsenal of technical analysis and creative interpretation.

Film-maker Richard Greenberg and architectural historian Steven Murray collaborated on *Architecture of Transcendence*, a motion picture about a Gothic cathedral in Beauvais, France. Their work revealed something of the potential which successful collaboration between built-environment and motion-picture professionals holds. Greenberg envisioned the motion picture camera as an "observer who [was] continually moving through space, who experience[d] in a perfect way what really wouldn't be possible for a human being."<sup>42</sup> As Greenberg's camera explored the space from vantage points

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<sup>41</sup>Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) 52

<sup>42</sup>Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) 64



typically inaccessible to human observers, it revealed to architectural historian Murray certain limitations of textual explanations of such spaces. Murray commented that,

every [textual] description of Gothic architecture resorts to certain cliché's...we talk about the cathedral 'soaring' [and]...the bays 'expanding' ...[but] Space does not expand. Space is inert ... and so the movement of the camera [was] an attempt to energize the building. And by moving through the building, indeed it soars. It turns. It moves. It does all those things. But we [the built environment and motion picture professional's] are making it do that.<sup>43</sup>

The well-rendered motion picture about architecture, then, can trigger both emotional and intellectual responses in the viewer. This ability renders it the perfect tool for preservation persuasion. In addition, it can provide the educational component which preservationists believe is necessary to advance understanding and appreciation of the built environment.

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<sup>43</sup>Video Guide, *Art on Film, Film on Art* (1992) 64.





## CHAPTER TWO

### POSITIONING THE ARGUMENT:

#### The Rhetoric and Communications Strategy of the Preservation Movement

The arguments which favor historic preservation and the means by which preservationists attempt to persuade have varied historically. These philosophically-driven rhetorical shifts occurred, and continue to occur, as preservationists have attempted to make their case as persuasively as possible, while adapting it to the changing roles which they perceive preservation has played in society. Carol Rose, in an article in the *Stanford Law Review*, identified three dominant perspectives which have motivated, and in some cases still do, motivate preservation. Rose argued that the earliest phases of preservation, beginning in the 19th-century, focused on those buildings and sites which had significant historical and patriotic associations. The early to mid-20th century preservation efforts, according to Rose, had a broader cultural, aesthetic and architectural focus. And, finally, Rose characterized the most recent preservation efforts (especially from the 1970's to the present) as



motivated by "a concern for the environment...[which] stresses sense of place."<sup>1</sup>

The motives which Rose delineated as the basis for preservation actions are reflected in the rhetoric which forms the preservation argument. However, it is inaccurate of Rose to imply that, as the motivations for preservation evolved, preservationists necessarily discarded one argument for another entirely. Indeed, this review of preservation rhetoric will illustrate that, depending upon the specific background of the communicator, "outmoded" motivations are still occasionally called upon to position an argument.

It is also imprecise to suggest that there is only one preservation argument or to believe that any one source speaks for the movement as a whole. Preservation motivations are too complex and diverse to be definitively encapsulated in the positions and arguments of one group.<sup>2</sup> However there is a central group which, in the minds of the general public, does exemplify the definitive voice on preservation policy

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Rose, "Preservation and Community: New Directions in the Law of Historic Preservation" in *Stanford Law Review*, Volume 33, (January 1981). 480

<sup>2</sup> This is an important concern when reviewing preservation rhetoric because it reveals the difficulty in excising prior philosophical history when crafting a persuasive argument. In a field which brings together such a multitude of practitioners from a variety of disciplines it is difficult, if not impossible, to articulate the preservation argument. Rather we will refer to the dominant mode of the preservation argument as evidenced by presentations in various periodicals and publication which are in-focused--directed toward the professional preservation community--as a means of identifying the arguments which are to be employed in the outer-directed messages which preservationist will utilize as the basis for their persuasive presentations.



issues - The National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust, whether or not preservation professionals completely agree with its positions, represents preservation to those Americans who are at all aware of the field. And this popular reliance on only one of the many preservation voices has contributed mightily to public misperceptions about the role and nature of preservation. Unlike the American conservation movement, which has created a spate of national organizations devoted to various aspects of conservationists interests, the American preservation movement has developed only this one major national-level organization. Although a number of organizations such as the American Institute of Architects and the Society of Architectural Historians have preservation committees and others such as the Association for Preservation Technology or Preservation Action focus on specific preservation activities, the National Trust, according to William Murtaugh, remains "the largest single national organization representing the private citizen on a broad spectrum of preservation issues."<sup>3</sup>

The *Report of the Committee on the Organization of the National Trust*, (1948) and the statement of purpose contained therein, is the wellspring of a formalized preservation

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<sup>3</sup>William J. Murtaugh, *Keeping Time: The Theory and History of Preservation in America*. (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. 1988)  
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philosophy in the United States.<sup>4</sup> In presenting its Statement of Purpose for the National Trust, the organizing committee built on the National Park Service's precedent to "preserve and interpret the great monuments of history, architecture and archaeology in the United States." The committee established that the goal of the National Trust was "the preservation and interpretation of sites and structures significant in American history and culture."<sup>5</sup> This was to be accomplished by "whatever practicable methods come to hand" or, as a last resort, by outright acquisition of property. These guidelines established the National Trust as an active, hands-on preservation organization.

By the 1960's, however, the National Trust had begun to broaden both their purposes for preservation and the rhetorical arguments which would support those purposes. Now the call was to do more than merely preserve and interpret national monuments. "The purpose of the Trust is to arouse public interest in the preservation of American monuments... and to spearhead the American preservation movement on a

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to this date (1948) it is difficult to point to any extensive attempt to codify or delineate a national level preservation argument in any unified way, although the Federal Government had, through the National Park Service, begun to establish some philosophical guidelines for historic preservation. While private institutions, such as Colonial Williamsburg, whose work had national implications or local groups such as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, were establishing arguments in favor of historic preservation it is my contention that their arguments reflected their institutional philosophies rather than serve to speak for a national movement.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Committee on Organization of the National Trust*. 1948 in Mulloy (1976) 247





national scale." According to its 1964 Statement of Purpose, the National Trust was "a militant, independent organization ...that [sought] to mobilize and channel national sentiment and opinion in support of historic preservation" as well as to "serve as a "clearinghouse for national preservation information."<sup>6</sup> The National Trust, as Elizabeth Mulloy suggested, now saw itself as a leader, an advocate and an informational exchange for the preservation movement. The National Trust, wrote Mulloy, "can agitate, initiate, teach, guide, inspire, support and point the way. But...the Trust would [also] have to convince citizens of the value of preservation...and spur them to action."<sup>7</sup>

Even though the National Trust had begun to position itself--and as its de facto spokesperson, the entire preservation movement--as activists with a populist mission, it had not completely abandoned those motives which Carol Rose associated with the earliest preservation impulses, however. The National Trust still entertained the notion that preservation had vaguely inspirational or educative purposes. "[The Trust] believes in the educational values of historic sites and buildings, and views them as a means of public instruction and patriotic inspiration."<sup>8</sup> Whether this

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<sup>6</sup> Mulloy (1976) 251

<sup>7</sup> Mulloy (1966) 91

<sup>8</sup> "The Purpose of the National Trust: A Statement Adopted by the Board of Trustees, May 1964. in Elizabeth D. Mulloy, *The History of the National Trust for Preservation*, (Washington DC: The Preservation Press, 1976), Appendix 14, 250-1.



statement actually spoke for preservationists everywhere is improbable but in the eyes of the Trust and, perhaps more importantly, the American public it did since they were "the spearhead of the American preservation movement on a national scale." One would be hard pressed to identify a more dominant force in the establishment of the preservation argument.<sup>9</sup>

One year later, in 1965, remarks by Gordon Gray, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Trust, indicated that the Trust continued to reposition its preservation argument. While not completely abandoning a commitment to "history," Gray's comments suggested that preservation rhetoric sought a more common ground. Gray argued that "because Americans once feared history, we called our monuments [of history] shrines"<sup>10</sup>...As Americans learned to live with history, however, we have begun to call our monuments 'landmarks' which," Gray intimated, meant that "...we accept them as part of our environment."<sup>11</sup> The recognition of this relationship between specific buildings and a larger environment marks a turn toward the positioning of preservation as an "environmental" issue. "Landmarks must

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<sup>9</sup>Mulloy (1976), 250-1.

<sup>10</sup>Gray's suggestion that Americans called their monuments "shrines" also revealed, perhaps, instead of or in addition to fear, a reverence for the "monuments of history". Depending on ones religious and philosophical beliefs, reverence need not necessarily denote fear.

<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from an Address by Gordon Gray, "1966-67 Decade of Decision" from the Annual Report of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States, 1966 in Elizabeth D. Mulloy, The History of the National Trust for Preservation, (Washington DC. The Preservation Press, 1976.) Appendix 15, 252.



be protected as a natural resource, just as open space, redwoods and wildlife," Gray wrote.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, he suggested that preservationists had to "stop simply talking to each other" and he advocated a new communications strategy and a reshaping of the preservationist image. The future of preservation lay, Gray pointed out, in such practical and open-minded concepts as re-use, economic sensitivity and a consideration of vernacular as well as high style architecture.<sup>13</sup> Each of these areas of focus suggest a shift toward more populist concerns.

Turning policy ideas into a concrete populist reality would require more than internal discussion among converted preservationists at national conferences, however: it was going to require salesmanship. An article which appeared in *Historic Preservation* in early 1969 echoed Gordon Gray's sentiments that preservationists must do more than speak only to each other and it, too, underscored the notion of preservation as an "environmental" issue. "The problem of how to sell preservation," wrote Andrew Wolfe, "is two-fold: first the message itself concerns the total environment and therefore has limitless dimensions, and second, this message

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<sup>12</sup> Mulloy, (1976) Appendix 15, p252

<sup>13</sup> Gray also presented a case for the utilization of computers to create a preservation archive which could function as a centralizing network. The notion of a networked archive will be discussed in the conclusion of this thesis.



must be delivered to a vast number of people."<sup>14</sup> It was Wolfe's opinion that, to "put preservation across effectively, its apostles must utilize a professional public relations approach....The long term objective [of an outreach campaign]," he suggested, "[was] to change minds, not merely rescue or preserve this or that building."<sup>15</sup> Wolfe's advocacy of a focused message about the total environment appears to have struck a responsive chord with some preservationists, as a message which could "sell."

In 1972, Robert Stipe, a preservation lawyer, attempted to further position historic preservation as a "quality of life" concern as well as to distance preservation rhetoric from its historicist and antiquarian past. In an article which focused on legal techniques for preservationists Stipe substituted the term "conservation" for "preservation":

Historic conservation...is one aspect of the much larger problem, basically an environmental one, of enhancing, or perhaps providing for the first time, a quality of human life....The importance of our nostalgic, patriotic and intellectual impulses cannot be denied, but they are no longer a wholly sufficient motivation for what we are about.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew D. Wolfe, "Promoting the Preservation Cause" in *Historic Preservation* Volume #21 January-March 1969. 32

<sup>15</sup> Wolfe, (1969), 32.

<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Stipe, "Why Preserve Historic Resources?" in *Legal Techniques in Historic Preservation*. (Washington, DC: National Trust for Preservation, 1972). 342





The title of Stipe's piece, "Why Preserve Historic Resources?", further cemented the notion of preservation as an environmental concern. Buildings and sites became, in developing preservation rhetoric, resources like water and air. Stipe carefully avoided alienating those preservationists who still valued antiquarian, historical or aesthetic motivations for preservation but he emphatically suggested that if the preservation movement were to become more effective it must be positioned as a "quality of life" argument, an argument which the National Trust assimilated. In 1973, the Study Committee of the National Trust, in its report to the Board of Trustees, stated that

We recommend that the National Trust regard historic preservation as the protection and use of the historic and cultural heritage, conducted in the context of the broad environmental and land use movement aimed at the overall improvement of **the quality of life** (emphasis added)...It involves the natural environment as well as the man-made, because they are closely interwoven....A concern for quality of life is common to all people.<sup>17</sup>

Bruce Chapman, in an article about adaptive use, sought to even further distance contemporary preservation from a less marketable historicist past. Chapman identified the field as "urban conservation," omitting not only history but the notion of preservation, itself, from the nomenclature.

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<sup>17</sup> Study Committee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Report to the Advisory Council. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1973), 113.



"Urban conservation" Chapman wrote, "is not just a romantic indulgence in nostalgia. It is a physical restatement of the long hallowed American values of frugality, good craftsmanship and community responsibility."<sup>18</sup> Clearly, those who practiced preservation and who wrote for the professional audience, were attempting to divorce historic preservation from its associations with amateur antiquarians and historic shrines and, to use a term of the day, "make it relevant." This recasting of the why of preservation is a critical aspect in the development of in-group and out-group rhetoric. Preservation theorists such as Stipe and Chapman were establishing the internal basis for what would become the way in which preservationists, including the National Trust, would frame persuasive arguments to the public at large. And these same arguments would be promulgated through the communications strategy of the preservation movement to be, supporters hoped, absorbed by that public.

The decision to position preservation as a "quality of life" issue served to link and ally preservation to another quality of life movement: American environmentalism, which

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce Chapman. "Adaptive Use: A Survey of Construction Costs." *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: Report to the President and the Congress of the United States.*, (Washington DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation) June 1976, 67

Although, to be fair, Chapman's notions of frugality, good craftsmanship and community responsibility owed more, perhaps, to his own somewhat Alger-esque nostalgic notions than to an actual reading of American history. A cursory review of historical and material culture literature suggests that buncom, hucksterism, poor craftsmanship and lack of concern for community have been with Americans throughout their history.



had a longer, more august and publicly well-perceived image. One goal of this association with the environmental movement was to broaden the ranks of preservationists and, specifically, to increase membership in the National Trust. Elizabeth Mulloy, in her *History of the National Trust*, wrote:

The broadening understanding of historic preservation to include concern for the quality of the environment is, in turn, broadening the ranks of those interested in preservation. The new constituents not only increase the number of preservation advocates but they alter the character of the movement and add to its strength.<sup>19</sup>

By the middle 1970s, it was an accepted notion among the preservationists that historic preservation was, if not an out-and-out part of the environmental movement, certainly an associated segment of the conservationist party. Richard Jenrette, in the 1978 Advisory Council Report, wrote that:

"Most preservationists would as soon drop the, all too frequent, modifier 'historic' in describing the broad-based preservation movement underway in the country today...The preservation movement has gone populist...The key words [now] are **conservation, recycling and restoration**".<sup>20</sup> [emphasis added]

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<sup>19</sup> Mulloy, (1976), 283-4.

<sup>20</sup> Richard H. Jenrette. *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: Report to the President and the Congress of the United States*. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1978.) 46



Newspaper columnists applauded the success of the preservation movement and unabashedly identified it as part of the environmental movement. "The preservation movement has achieved one of the greatest fastest victories of any environmental movement in American history" gushed Robert Campbell in the *Boston Globe*. But while preservationists had adopted the watchwords of the environmental movement and some journalists proffered the environmentalist imprimatur, some preservationists questioned whether preservation had actually made any strides towards achieving the popular impact of environmentalism. "Preservationists have heretofore lacked the gumption to exert the sort of influence on behalf of cultural resources that one sees from groups like the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society on behalf of things natural," wrote David Cleary.<sup>21</sup>

When preservationists gathered together in 1979 to reassess what the movement's goals would be for the 1980s they saw that, whatever the public's perception, many changes had taken place during the past decade, some of which made them uneasy. Despite attempts to clearly define themselves, the preservation movement still had an uncertain public image. In *Preservation: Towards an Ethic in the 1980's* preservationists lamented,

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<sup>21</sup>David A. Cleary, "Historic Preservation and Environmental Protection: The Role of the Historian." *The Public Historian*, Fall 1978, 34.





Many still see preservation as an elitist effort...it is ...considered as a vocation or avocation for a limited segment of the population. Even though the preservation movement's participants and concerns are increasingly diverse...there is an increasing backlash...against preservation. <sup>22</sup>

In 1978, for example, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation sponsored a poll of local public works officials in order to obtain a sampling of their views of historic preservation. While the officials agreed that it served the public interest to preserve historic properties, they also felt that preservation should rank low on the list of public priorities. They saw preservation as something of an academic or artistic interest, far removed from the realities of everyday life.<sup>23</sup> In fact, preservationists themselves questioned whether they possessed adequate methods for determining whether preservation or some other development alternative provided for the greater public good. The question of whether preservation served the greater good was on the public's mind as well. "Some [of the public] still view historic preservation as a means of enshrining a local site rather than as an important force in neighborhood improvement...when officials polled residents of a working class neighborhood to determine which revitalization

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<sup>22</sup> *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1979) 119

<sup>23</sup> *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Report to the President and the Congress of United States*. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1978), 79.



technique they preferred, historic preservation was their last choice."<sup>24</sup> This gulf between the way that preservationists saw themselves and the way in which they were perceived by the general public formed the crux of the communications problem within the preservation movement. By the end of the 1970's, preservationists confronted the fact that despite the extensive internal process of defining themselves which their field had undergone--shifting from a group whose interest was historical shrines to one concerned with built-environment ecology--they had not defined themselves and their cause in a positive way to the public at large. At the same time, preservationists were learning, (and perhaps they continue to learn,) something which Abraham Lincoln pointed out to Stephen Douglas in 1858: "Public sentiment is everything. With Public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes or decisions possible or impossible to be executed."<sup>25</sup>

Public outreach and public relations has been a crucial, but often ineffectively handled, aspect of the preservation movement. It is the means by which the movement must attract public support, giving form and substance to its

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<sup>24</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. *Report to the President and the Congress of United States*. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1984). 65.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, August 21, 1858.



painstakingly defined goals. Public outreach is the application of developed preservation rhetoric: where defined philosophical goals become implemented on a practical level. And if the National Trust was, as its policy literature stated, "spearheading the American preservation movement on a national scale" than the Trust was primarily responsible for preservation's ability or failure to "arouse public interest."<sup>26</sup>

The National Trust's internal analysis suggested that the organization was aware of some confusion between the writing of policy and its actual implementation and dissemination to the public. "The Trust needs to determine strategies and priorities to guide its operations. All aspects of the Trust programs have suffered from a lack of policy strategy."<sup>27</sup> And as early as 1973 the Trust recognized that it "must strengthen its public relations program in order to broaden the ranks and to increase the effectiveness of those working to improve the historic and cultural environment."<sup>28</sup> "The National Trust," wrote Elizabeth Mulloy, "is the nation's chief communicator of the preservation message. Through books, a magazine and newspaper, the news media, films, videotape and speeches it informs

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<sup>26</sup> Mulloy (1976), 252.

<sup>27</sup> Goals and Programs. A Summary of the Study Committee Report to the Trustees, The National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1973, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Report to the President and the Congress of United States. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1973) 112



preservationists on new techniques and wins converts to the preservation cause."<sup>29</sup>

This list of the means by which a "preservation message" was communicated reveals much about the attitude of the National Trust with regards to communication media. By 1966, when Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act, the motion picture, and more specifically television, was the dominant medium for information dissemination in the United States. Yet, the predominant medium by which the National Trust chose to "convince and spur" was print. This text-oriented policy is one from which the National Trust has rarely deviated. In the almost half century since it was chartered by Congress in 1949, the National Trust has produced three motion pictures, one tele-conference, a few instructional videos and several public service announcements. During that same time period the National Trust established a newspaper, a glossy magazine, a policy-level magazine dedicated to preservation issues and established its own publishing house.

The National Trust's dependency on print and text-based communications and the spotty, fits-and-starts employment of motion pictures can be traced to several underlying causes. Preservationists, by and large, came from academic backgrounds and gravitated to the medium with which they were

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<sup>29</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (1978) 169





most comfortable: the printed word. And given the perceived complexity of preservation rhetoric and debate, perhaps motion pictures seemed incapable of conveying the subtlety of argument required. And, finally, given the Trust's limited budgets and the expense--perceived and real--of motion pictures, the Trust relied on a medium which they believed would give them the best value for their dollar.

Motion pictures were never a vital public relations arrow in the National Trust's communications quiver.<sup>30</sup> Public service television and radio announcements were viewed as supplements to the Trust's print publications *Preservation News* and *Historic Preservation*. Yet, while preservation policy literature extolled the virtues of outreach and diversity, the only way to obtain a copy of the "information clearinghouse's" newsletter or magazine was to become a member of the National Trust. Thus, non-members--those people most in need of preservation education and persuasion--could hardly become aware of the benefits of preservation--economic, aesthetic or otherwise--unless they happened upon a copy of the Trust's publications at some member's house or

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<sup>30</sup> For a brief period, from roughly 1976 - 1979 the Trust did establish a motion-picture lending library. These motion pictures could be rented from the audio-visual department of the National Trust during these years. These films were catalogued in a book prepared by Don Tippman for the National Trust--*Film, Etc.* How effective this program was and how extensively it was used is impossible to say. However, by the time the book was actually published the program had been abandoned. Purchasers who received the book found an accompanying note which informed them that the motion pictures were no longer available. This program will be further discussed in Chapter Four.



office. In fact, the Trust's primary arm of information distribution was not obtainable at the local news-stand or public library. Meanwhile, the democratically accessible public airways--mandated to broadcast public service announcements gratis--were seen as supplements to publications of limited distribution.

The 1980's brought additional problems to add to those of poor image and public misperceptions about the nature of preservation. Governmental monetary support, which, as J. Myrick Howard would later point out<sup>31</sup>, had been encouraged by fervor over the nation's bicentennial began to dry up in this decade. Dwindling federal support motivated preservationists to seek out new alliances such as those with realtors and developers. Historic tax credits encouraged adaptive use projects with what some would later evaluate as dubious preservation benefit.<sup>32</sup>

The 1980s also witnessed yet another repositioning of preservationist rhetoric. In an era marked by political

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<sup>31</sup>J. Myrick Howard. "Where the Action Is: Preservation and Local Governments." in *The American Mosaic: Preserving A Nation's Heritage*. edited by Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette Lee. (Washington, DC: ICOMOS, 1987) 123

<sup>32</sup>See Samuel Y. Harris, "Alternative Use as a Preservation Strategy: The Eastern State Penitentiary Case Study." in *Historic Preservation Forum*. September/October 1993. Harris is not alone in his analysis of the potential destructive effects of the tax-credit as a preservation tool. A motion picture directed by Nore Jacobsen and produced by Islet Films, *Delivered Vacant* (1992), tracked the impact of tax-credit fueled development in Hoboken, NJ over an eight year span. The motion picture illustrated that not only were the existing neighborhoods of Hoboken irreparably altered but the "adaptive-use" development projects left the city with a surfeit of unrentable offices and "loft apartments."



conservatism, preservationists sought to characterize their movement as fiscally responsible and they tried to become "entrepreneurial" hoping, perhaps, to gain political and economic advantage by forming "partnerships." But although the economic value of preservation was employed to position preservation as a cause one wonders whether fiscal soundness was truly a **motivating** argument in favor of preservation. "Preservationists emphasize the economic value of preservation because it is a telling argument in these times," stated the Advisory Council Report in 1982. "But preservation is not only a matter of money...the traditional justifications for it are as valid now as they ever were."<sup>33</sup>

Preservationists should not forget, suggested the Advisory Council report that "preservation is popular because it has an appeal to all segments of society."<sup>34</sup> Yet, based on membership figures the National Trust for Preservation was, clearly, not all that appealing. In 1979, although it was estimated that "2 million Americans were actively involved in preservation only 140,000 were members of the National Trust." This disparity prompted Treutt Latimer to ask whether "these [were] figures to be proud of if we are, in fact,

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<sup>33</sup> Report of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Annual Report, 1982, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Report of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Annual Report, 1982. 60.



leading the movement for the preservation of architectural and historic resources in America?"<sup>35</sup>

As preservationists attempted to formulate a communication strategy for the 1980s, they concluded that information programs needed to be broadened to "communicate more forcefully through publications and other media that preservation is part of the quality of life movement."<sup>36</sup> Yet, even at the beginning of the 1980s, this strategy to employ persuasive media listed print media first and combined all other modes of communication, including broadcast and cable television, radio and motion pictures as "other media." Such a reduction of these powerful and dominant forms of communication to the category of "other", reveals the depth of print and text bias within the preservation movement.

The Communications Committee did however determine that one goal for the preservation movement was to "expand national television coverage." But at no time did they formally suggest that the preservation movement might control their message by producing programming of their own. Nor did they broach the notion of taking on an underwriting role for

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<sup>35</sup> Treutt Latimer, "A National Perspective" in *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1979.) 116.

To put these figures in some perspective, the population of the United States in 1979 was approximately 218,000,000 which meant that, providing the estimated figures were not inflated, roughly .9 of one percent of the population were involved as preservationists while .06 of one percent of the population were members of the National Trust.

<sup>36</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation. *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (1979) 34





a nationally distributed show such as PBS's *This Old House*, even though a 1981 Advisory Council report trumpeted that *This Old House* had won an Emmy award "outpolling *Laverne and Shirley*", and crowed that the show was seen in over 200 cities.<sup>37</sup> This willingness to link preservation to popular culture while remaining aloof from it is one indication of an elitist ambivalence which runs throughout the preservation movement and is especially apparent in the National Trust. The refusal to embrace a popular culture version of preservation like *This Old House* is indicative of a more deeply seated resistance to allow the populist "home renovator" membership in the same preservation club as the conservator of an architectural icon hallowed by associative inspirational, historical or aesthetic values.

Perhaps David McCullough, a historian who was also successful as a motion picture scriptwriter, host and narrator,<sup>38</sup> best indicates the ambivalence on the part of the academics involved with preservation to employ motion pictures. While, on the one hand, McCullough advocated that "filmmakers...must be considered the flagbearers [of the

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<sup>37</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, *Report to the President on the Congress of the United States*. 1981, 88

<sup>38</sup> McCullough wrote the script for the Ken Burns motion picture *Brooklyn Bridge* and served as host/narrator for the National Trust produced motion picture *America's Most Endangered*, 1996. The notion of the endangered building is yet another attempt to co-opt the rhetoric of the environmental movement drawing the analogy of the endangered species to the endangered building. This rhetorical shift should not be minimized for it indicates a recognition on the part of preservationists that their traditional modes of appeal were not working.



preservation movement], on the other he countered "we do not like television and for good reason. Most of it is terrible."<sup>39</sup> McCullough actually lamented that television was part of our culture and suggested that we were in its grip, as if television were some subversive, totalitarian scheme and as if viewers couldn't just ignore the programming which didn't interest them.

McCullough, among preservation academicians, is not alone in his view. This ambivalence--as expressed by McCullough--is one reason why, despite a recognition that they have much to offer, motion pictures have not been exploited by the preservation movement. The underlying notion that "most television is terrible" is one which is fomented by certain elites and is evidenced by an unwillingness "get their hands dirty" like the great unwashed who actually receive useful information from the "little black box". If we explore McCullough's scenario, however, and draw some analogies we can illustrate how utterly absurd his position is.

Television is merely a mode of transmitting motion picture media to the public. Information arrives at viewers' sets after distribution by broadcast stations, cable television companies and communication satellites. The

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<sup>39</sup> David McCullough, "A Sense of Time and Place" in *Past Meets Future: Saving America's Historic Environments*. edited by Antoinette Lee (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1991) 33



majority of motion picture information that is produced will, at one time or another, be distributed in this manner. This mode of distribution accounts for *Masterpiece Theater* and *The Civil War* as well as *America's Funniest Home Video's* and *Beavis and Butthead*. The critical point is that television is a merely a mode of distribution of motion picture information. It is up to the viewer to decide what, of that information, is worth consuming. Perhaps a particularly discerning viewer may find little of this distributed information compelling and worthy of their time. Perhaps a person who perceived himself as just such a discerning viewer might erroneously conclude that "television is terrible." But suppose that the majority of printed information were distributed in the same manner, so that each day enormous amounts of printed matter spilled out of a tube and landed in one's living room. Would not a similar amount of this printed information be likely to be deemed "terrible" by a discerning reader? Would it then be logical to assert that "printing is terrible" and long for the good old days when all information was distributed by the oral tradition? If scholars who are respected and presumably intelligent cannot get over their resistance to the motion picture media than the preservation movement will never fully exploit what these technologies have to offer.

Confusion about what preservation is and who is a preservationist marks one current running through the



literature of the movement. "As a movement, historic preservation and the areas of its involvement are constantly changing. It lacks a generally accepted philosophy as well as goals and scope."<sup>40</sup> One recommendation offered by the Communication Committee at the Second Williamsburg Preservation Conference (1979) was to utilize motion pictures to "target particular audiences with a preservation message [shaped] to suit their particular interest and communicate it aggressively."<sup>41</sup> G. Donald Adams, a media services manager at Greenfield Village, suggested that preservation be presented "as a matter of lifestyle" and toward that end suggested that preservationists study "national communication programs such as those aimed at the reduction of energy consumption and passage of returnable bottle legislation."<sup>42</sup> Herbert Gunther, a media director at the Public Media Center, pointed out that, for preservation to garner greater public support the movement needed to communicate what preservation was about "in terms that people understand and care about. "The preservation movement now reaches a limited audience; it does not touch the people who are needed for support...to make

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<sup>40</sup>The National Trust for Historic Preservation. *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (1979) 40

<sup>41</sup>The National Trust for Historic Preservation. *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (1979) 35

<sup>42</sup>G Donald Adams. "The Preservation Message and the Press" in *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (1979) 125





something that works at the community as well as the national level." <sup>43</sup>

What the preservation movement in general, and the National Trust in particular, failed to do in their attempts to communicate to the general public, was to convey the message that every American who painted his house or cleaned his gutters was a preservationist. Such small acts of "stewardship" like exterior painting or removal of leaves from a rain gutter which any homeowner recognizes as "chores" were, in fact, examples of building conservation in action. By not developing messages which emphasized the commonalty of such preservation goals, the preservation movement failed to elicit an empathetic response and encourage a sense of personal involvement and responsibility in the "average American." And in so doing the movement failed to communicate, as the environmentalists had done so effectively, that even a simple act like picking up a bit of street trash was an act of "environmentalism". This was the message that conservationists, unlike preservationists, successfully communicated in common, everyday language. Preservation, and as the responsible mouthpiece of the movement, the National Trust, never, it would seem, analyzed the methods by which they communicated information and

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<sup>43</sup> Herbert Gunther. *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*. (1979)  
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contrasted them to the strategies employed by the environmentalists.

By the early 1990's, a slight shift began to occur within the communications strategy of the preservation movement. Although this strategy restructuring did not conclude that motion pictures were the dominant mode of communications it, at least, reflected a re-ordering of existing communication priorities and a recognition of the power of motion picture-based media. "We must tell our story better", wrote Peter Brink and Grant Dehart, "...[and] show how preservation is relevant to [peoples] lives...The communications technologies of television, radio and print can get the story out to the people ...we must use new technology or risk losing out to competing interests."<sup>44</sup>

While television (a motion picture medium) was finally listed before print as an important communication modality it must be pointed out that by the 1990's it was hardly a "new technology".

The rhetorical shifts which were required to position historic preservation as an "environmental" and "quality of life issue" have taken hold within preservation thinking. The terminology of the environmental movement has been completely co-opted by preservationists. Each year, the National Trust

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<sup>44</sup> Peter H. Brink and Grant DeHart "Findings and recommendations" in *Past Meets Future: Saving America's Historic Environments*. edited by Antoinette Lee (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1991) 20



publishes a list of "the ten most endangered buildings and sites" in the United States. The historic building takes its place, at least rhetorically, next to the rain forest and the American bald eagle as an endangered resource. Precisely how ingrained this rhetorical shift has become is evidenced by a recent article in *Historic Preservation Forum* written by Susan Maxman. She wrote that "preservation isn't just a luxury...it's a necessity, a strategy for our times and our critical needs."<sup>45</sup> Maxman suggested that the preservation ethic, since it encouraged the adaptive use of existing buildings, promoted conservation of natural resources. Ms. Maxman proposed that preservationists make certain that the public and its officials be "familiar with the economic and environmental imperatives of preservation."<sup>46</sup> She noted that "where we once based our language on aesthetics or sentimentality, we now have a strong arsenal of economic and environmental facts to make our case...The value of preservation...is enhanced by the environmental sensitivity of the preservation ethic."<sup>47</sup> Maxman's article cements the notion that preservation, perhaps no longer historic, is an environmental issue. But the means by which representatives of historic preservation have chosen to communicate their message, both historically and currently, bears little

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<sup>45</sup>Susan A. Maxman, "Historic Preservation: A Sustainable Design Strategy for the 90's". *Historic Preservation Forum*, January/February 1994, 5.

<sup>46</sup>Maxman, (1994), 5.

<sup>47</sup>Maxman, (1994), 6.



resemblance to the focused and intense media efforts of environmentalists. Perhaps this suggests why, despite rhetoric to the contrary, the preservation movement remains a marginalized cause--environmentalist only by decree.





## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MOTION PICTURES OF THE NATIONAL TRUST 1966-1995

By the middle 1950's, staff members of the National Trust were making radio and television appearances to "emphasize the economics of practical preservation" and they pursued a variety of informational programs, primarily in print media.<sup>1</sup> Although the National Trust's leaders realized that "preservation was still low on the list of priorities of their fellow Americans - and of their government," it was not until 1965 that the Trust exhibited any interest in utilizing motion pictures as a means to increase public awareness of preservation.<sup>2</sup>

Encouraged by the Urban Renewal Administration, the Trust's Information Department applied for a grant to "produce a motion picture that would show the ways in which the Urban Renewal program could assist in preservation undertakings."<sup>3</sup> The grant was awarded in 1967 by the Department of Housing and Urban development and the resultant film was the Trust's first foray into motion picture production and its first attempt to utilize this medium as a

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<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth D. Mulloy, *The History of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*. (Washington DC: The Preservation Press, 1976), 20.

<sup>2</sup>Mulloy, (1976) 71.

<sup>3</sup>Mulloy, (1976) 44.



means to spread the preservation message. *How Will We Know It is Us?*, produced by Lawrence Rantz under the auspices of the Membership and Training Services department of the National Trust in cooperation with the Department of Housing and Urban development, was subtitled "Preservation and Renewal, A Way of Looking Back and Going Forward." In *How Will We Know It Is Us ?*, the National Trust identified itself as **the** primary source to provide preservation assistance in the United States. The motion picture additionally promoted the link between HUD and the Trust and suggested that the goal of the National Trust--and the practice of historic preservation--was to "preserve and renew" and perhaps--reflecting the sentiment of the Johnson Administration as espoused "Lady Bird" Johnson,--"beautify."

There is little doubt to the modern viewer that this film was produced during the 1960's. Beyond such obvious clues as fashion and automobile styles, the entire film is punctuated with a musical track that borders on "safe psychedelia," music that reflected "hip and now" without being offensive or aggressive. The choice of this "hip" music suggests that the filmmakers, and perhaps the Trust itself, saw the need to appeal to a broader range of people than a more staid form of backing track--such as generic classical music or jazz--might have. On the other hand, a "voice of



God"<sup>4</sup> narrator presented a series of questions which the motion picture sought to answer. Since the cutting edge mode of documentary film-making during this era was "cinema verité" which generally eschewed the use of a narrator, the decision to employ such narration suggests a certain conservatism. This may have stemmed more from a desire to be inoffensive than as a reflection of underlying political conservatism. Such stylistic treatment seems to be typical of governmental and corporate documentaries, films which reflect an organizational rather than populist point of view. To be fair, however, this motion picture was charged with presenting a plethora of auditory information and it is also possible that the film-makers saw the use of narration as an economical option.

The motion picture began with images of older buildings. "Gone," intoned the narrator..."gone by neglect." The narration suggested that these buildings were destroyed because we were "indifferent"...we "failed to recognize their value." "How will we know it is us without our past", he asked, in a direct quotation from John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.<sup>5</sup> This reference to *The Grapes of Wrath* had several

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<sup>4</sup>The term "voice of God" in reference to motion picture narration is a common one in analyses of documentary filmmaking. It is generally used to describe a narration in which we never see the narrator, it typically carries with it a connotation of male authority that speaks from "on high". Clearly, it is the voice of authority and most often represents the filmmakers sensibility.

<sup>5</sup>Intriguingly, Steinbeck's literary approach to this novel was inspired by the motion picture documentary *The Plow That Broke the*



implications. On the one hand *Grapes of Wrath* was both a popular literary work and a popular motion picture and its use indicated a recognition of the power of these respective literary and motion picture genres as persuasive devices. But the National Trusts evocation of the story was also a rhetorical and propagandistic tool. W. Russell Neuman asserts that one manner in which propaganda works involves drawing on a common past. Propaganda, wrote Neuman, "draws upon common myths, simplifies complex realities and...provides comforting assurances."<sup>6</sup>

The first section of the motion picture presented preservation rationale. "What must we keep?," asks the narrator. Such a question, Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell suggest, is a rhetorical technique designed to engage the viewer and persuade him to internalize the information; a way to insure the viewers involvement.<sup>7</sup> The narrator observes that we are a nation in the process of change and, probably reflecting the HUD point of view, "reshaping and renewing our cities". Reflecting the

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Plains produced by Pare Lorentz in 1936. "Steinbeck was impressed with the cinematic technique of background montage...and conceived his work as a sequence of general chapters in montage style and narrative chapters for the Joads, his fictitious migrant family". See Arthur Krim, "Filming Route 66: Documenting the Dust Bowl Highway." in *Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*. edited by Stuart C. Aiken and Leo E. Zorn. (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994)

<sup>6</sup> W. Russell Neuman, *The Future of the Mass Audience*, (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1992) 87.

<sup>7</sup> See Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1992)





preservation philosophy of this era, the motion picture focused exclusively on cities and primarily on buildings. The impetus to position preservation as part of the larger environmental movement, although under discussion at the preservation policy level, had not yet been incorporated into general preservationist rhetoric. The narrator proceeded to inform us that, while each generation seeks to build, each generation must preserve, as well. The message of this introductory segment was essentially that buildings tell us who we were and, hence, who we are.

Preservation was positioned as pro-progress with the narration supporting the benefits of "preservation amidst change." The film explored several "case-study" cities where preservation was part of the urban renewal process. One such case study was the Worcester Square project in New Haven, Connecticut<sup>8</sup> where "blight" threatened the "once fine old buildings." The documentary contended that by working with the city and with the support of the federal government, local grassroots preservationists were able to rehabilitate this failing neighborhood. The motion picture made certain to mention that "no one wants to leave now," illustrating that the restoration and rehabilitation of this neighborhood contributed to stasis and maintenance of real estate values.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Other case study cities included Monterrey, California, the "College Hill Area" of Providence, Rhode Island and Galena, Illinois.

<sup>9</sup> This line "no one wants to leave now" may well have been a reference to "white flight" and indicates the hand of HUD more than the National



The motion picture visited an African-American neighborhood in San Francisco that, according to the narrator, would have been "livable, if it wasn't so depressing". The goal of preservation in this situation, the motion picture asserted, was to keep the neighborhood and population intact. While the inclusion of an African-American community in this motion picture appears to present an image of multi-cultural involvement in the preservation process, it should be pointed out that the African-Americans depicted here were not spearheading the preservation campaign. Rather they were depicted as awaiting the salvation which preservation could bring. On the other hand, this segment did reflect an awareness of the discussions of community preservation which were taking place in preservation policy rhetoric at this time.

One particularly telling sequence in the motion picture was indicative of not only the fundamental elitism, but also of the rigidity and inflexibility of the preservation movement at this time (at least as manifest in rhetoric of the National Trust) and it offers insight as to why some segments of the American public might not have embraced preservation. This sequence extolled the virtues of the preservation efforts in Philadelphia's Society Hill neighborhood and stressed the "authenticity" of its

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Trust. This also indicates that the economic benefit of preservation which becomes an important rhetorical tool in the 1980's, was part of the preservation argument almost from the start.



restoration. The sedate, chaste, red-brick buildings of Society Hill are juxtaposed with a segment featuring a Victorian neighborhood in San Francisco. The houses presented in the San Francisco sequence are typically decorated in "painted lady" style and some of the color choices on the buildings presented by the filmmakers express a bold palette. The motion picture identified these buildings as "psychedelic fun and games" which, the narrator portentously informed us, "there is no room for". These buildings are identified as "not properly restored" even though they appear to be in good repair and their neighborhood, which is made up of similar buildings, seems to be thriving.

Although it is clear that preservation policy thinking has changed considerably since then, it is important to realize that the National Trust did not produce another motion picture until 1977. Thus, as far as persuasive motion pictures are concerned, no other options were offered by the National Trust for almost a decade while this motion picture continued in circulation.

In closing, *How Will We Know It Is Us ?*, stressed that the relationship between HUD and the National Trust, in partnership with grassroots preservation organizations, could save and transform a community. Although, as the San Francisco sequence just discussed suggested, this partnership would hardly be one of equals. "Preserve or destroy", admonished the narrator. "It's up to the individual



community, but there is help available if you want it and seek it...." [Preservation offers] "a way of looking back and going forward...to create an environment we can live in with pleasure". But again, who was to decide what precisely constituted a pleasurable environment?

According to the National Trust's estimates, during the first six months of public availability, *How Will We Know It Is Us?* was seen by an estimated 3.2 million television viewers and between 1968 and 1973 it reached 22 million people.<sup>10</sup> During the same time period, the National Trust's publication circulation grew from 14,500 to 40,000 subscribers. Based on these numbers, if the National Trust were able to attribute each of these new member's to exposure the persuasive rhetoric of *How Will We Know It Is Us ?* they would have reached one-tenth of one percent of the viewing audience with their message. Either the motion picture medium is not a terribly effective means of persuasion--or this particular motion picture was not terribly persuasive. The conservation movement's simultaneous successful use of motion picture persuasion suggests that, in this case, the message and not the messenger was at fault.

Whether conscious or not, the Trust's decision to try to appeal to everyone in *How Will We Know It Is Us?* illustrates an approach and conveys a message which was repeated in each

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<sup>10</sup> Mulloy (1976), 177.





subsequent Trust-produced documentary. Preservation, as presented in *How Will We Know It Is Us?* was good for everyone. It saved our historic structures (provided we restored "properly") it helped to remove urban blight, maintained the tax base and real estate values and it provided housing. Not only did it makes economic sense, it was also morally grounded. Yet, the argument that preservation was good for everyone never really seemed to persuade or convince the viewer that preservation was good for anyone, an assessment supported by the National Trust's low membership numbers. Perhaps, *How Will We Know It Is Us?* and the subsequent Trust-produced motion pictures failed because they never touched the heart in any significant way: there was no emotional appeal. *How Will We Know It Is Us?* never had a story to follow nor anyone to care about. The soundbites from citizens which served as testimonials to the benefits of preservation contained such an obvious propagandist point of view that only the dimwitted could have believed preservation was capable of achieving all this film claimed. In *How Will We Know It Is Us?* preservation was presented as a governmental mandate which was to be carried out **regardless** of public support. More importantly the motion picture failed as a proselytizing device because *How Will We Know It Is Us?* never succeeded in establishing the preservation movement as a cause to believe in. It was ineffective in presenting historic preservation as a cause



important and compelling enough join and serve, and moreover, a cause that wanted you to join, a cause that invited everyone.

A more successful contrast to *How Will We Know It is Us?* was *A Future For the Past*<sup>11</sup>, a British documentary produced in 1971.<sup>12</sup> Produced by the Civic Trust in association with the Department of the Environment and the Pilgrim Trust and directed by Peter Bradford, the motion picture followed the Griersonian tradition of advocacy documentary.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of the motion picture was stated at the outset: "This is not an entertainment but a call to action." The narrator then posed the question: "Do the sort of towns we live in matter to us?".

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<sup>11</sup> Like the title for the National Trust's documentary *How Will We know It is Us?* the title for *A Future for the Past* also had literary origins. Sir Osbert Lancaster used a slight variation of this phrase as the title of an essay presented to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1953; *The Future for the Past*.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Means, who was an employee of the National Trust for Preservation and involved in some of the Trust's later filmmaking efforts, stated that when she was a Trust representative she took *A Future for the Past* to show to audiences rather than the Trust produced film *How Will We know It Is Us?*. It was Mean's opinion that the British documentary did a better job telling the preservation story and thought that the Trust Film was "dated" by the 1970's. Telephone interview with Mary Means, March 10, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> John Grierson was an important figure in the documentary film movement and is considered to be the "father of the social advocacy motion picture." It was Grierson's belief that motion pictures were the most effective means of informing the public about social policy needs. Grierson saw the motion picture as a pulpit from which to preach to the uninformed. Most so-called "quality of life" concerns utilize this type of motion picture as a means of hectoring the population. It is precisely this sort of motion picture which the environmental movement has relied on to spread their message. While it is often referred to as "social education", this sort of motion picture is actually persuasive in argument and propagandist in intent. The Griersonian documentary makes no pretense toward journalistic balance, it has a case to make and makes it.



The first section of the documentary presented an historic overview of the development of the English town and introduced the concept of forces which shape the design and growth of towns. This was accomplished through the use of animation as well as historical print images. The years pass quickly as the viewer is exposed to the ever-increasing rate of change imposed on townscapes by, the documentary argued, the forces of economics and industrialization. "The pace of development will double in the next quarter century," we are told. "What sort of towns will we leave for our children?" Asking viewers what they will leave for their children is a common technique of the persuasive documentary, appealing to a sense of parental responsibility for future generations and doing so on a primal emotional level.

A *Future for the Past* differed from the National Trust-produced preservation documentaries in several ways. First, it took a didactic approach, introducing, in a thoughtful manner, some of the more complex issues that affect life in the city. "What makes up the character of a town?" the narrator asked. With the aid of visual examples, he helps the viewer understand that the continuity of history, commerce, social and religious institutions, and public spaces like squares and monuments all contribute to our sense of community. Towns, the film argued, reflect the values of those in the past who built them and those in the present who change them.



The narrator of *A Future for the Past*, rather than an omniscient "voice of God", is a genial teacher who somehow leads the viewer to discovery rather than preaches at him or her. This difference in argumentative tone is accomplished through rhetorical technique. The viewer is engaged in the process of learning, and even though no alternative viewpoint is presented, the motion picture does not feel propagandist. This appeal to common values is no less an instrument of persuasion than the authoritative and proscriptive approach of *How Will We Know It Is Us?*. It is, in fact, even more persuasive because the viewer is engaged in the process of learning as he or she is persuaded. It seeks to explore a "reason why" rather than dictate a "how." As the viewer is guided to discovery, he or she reaches the conclusions which the film-makers intend, but the conclusions feel inwardly derived as opposed to externally imposed, and the viewer-learner internalizes them as if they were his or her own.

*A Future for the Past* is also a more powerful motion picture for advancing the cause preservation than *How Will We Know It Is Us?* because it offers viewers a tremendous amount of architectural information. The motion picture explores what makes towns different, introducing concepts of materials, space, scale and texture. In a subtle manner, it advances the viewers knowledge of the visual consequences of architectural design and hence his or her appreciation of and sensitivity to the built environment. When, for example, the





narrator speaks about the concept of texture, the viewer is shown a variety of buildings as well as street and sidewalk pavings as illustration. At one point in the film, after the introduction of a variety of textures and building styles, settings and city forms, the narrator comments that the built environment is a "living museum on free show", quite a different concept from that of a "problem to be solved" as presented in *How Will We Know It is Us?*. As presented by British preservationists, the entire built environment was a building museum if one knew how to look and *A Future for the Past* set out to teach them.<sup>14</sup>

The efficacy of motion pictures and the importance of proselytizing for architecture and architectural concepts so beautifully illustrated in *A Future for the Past* was touched upon by Bruno Zevi in his work *Architecture As Space*.

The lack of public interest in architecture cannot be considered inevitable and inherent in human nature or in the nature of a building... there is [instead] an incapacity on the part of architects, historians of architecture, and art critics to make themselves apostles of architecture, to spread the love of architecture, if not to the general public, then at least to the cultivated... Motion pictures, to a large extent, can recapture the spatial experience of walking thorough a building...[and]

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<sup>14</sup> To be fair, the British preservationists have a different set of concerns than American preservationists, as well as a different historical relationship to both buildings and space. British town and class structures are different and help to create different notions of tradition and permanence. However, this does not alter in any way the high level of effectiveness of this documentary. Nor does it diminish the applicability of this documentary approach to an American preservation audience.



are consequently taking their proper place in education.<sup>15</sup>

As *A Future for the Past* proselytized for the built-environment, the viewers understanding of the built environment grew. It was precisely this sort of education that Zevi alluded to. But Zevi overstated when he suggested, in 1957, that motion pictures are taking their proper place in education, for that has never really been the case. As Zevi asserted, motion pictures can present information in a manner which can enhance appreciation of the built environment and *A Future For the Past* offers a concrete example. The motion picture is well photographed and the images of towns and buildings are enhanced by sensitivity to camera placement and the effects of lighting on visual mood. The concept of spatial education and the need to spread the love for architecture which Zevi touches upon is precisely what the makers of *A Future for the Past* undertake and precisely what the makers of the first National Trust film--*How Will We Know If It Is Us?*-- do not. *A Future for the Past* assumed that one cannot appreciate what he or she does not understand, and thus offered the viewer enough information to see that the built environment has both a rhyme and a reason. *A Future for the Past* focused, at least initially, on the enjoyment that a sensitive viewing and experiencing of the

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<sup>15</sup>Zevi (1957), 122.



built environment can offer. It set out to establish the built environment as an object of pleasure -- a treat. By so doing, and by focusing on what will be visually appealing to **most** viewers the filmmakers have, in effect, given something of obvious value to their audience.

In the second half of the British documentary, the viewer is shown how insensitive development detracts from the visual and community appeal of the town. By this point in the motion picture the viewers feel--or should feel--as if something which pleases them is being taken away. If American preservation filmmakers such as the National Trust were able to convey this sense of personal loss, it is possible that they would have been more effective in establishing preservationist imperatives and increasing populist support.

This sense of personal loss was effectively dramatized in the following sequence from *A Future for the Past*. "Assets built up over centuries," the narrator intoned, "can be destroyed in weeks." This seemingly throw-away line makes certain that every viewer with an asset - a house, a car, a bank account can imagine what it would be like to be "wiped out." The use of the word "assets" also implies a fiscal unsoundness to this sort of destructive activity. While the narrator speaks these words, photographs of building after building appear and are set on fire. Each destroyed building burns before our eyes, revealing yet another building beneath which is then consumed. Accompanying this visual sequence is



an audio track with the sounds of jackhammers and buildings groaning and creaking under a demolition team's pry bars. Although this might sound somewhat heavy-handed in description, when viewed in a darkened theater and in the context of the motion picture, it offers an extremely effective condemnation of mindless destruction. And it harkens to techniques which appear in the more poetic independently-produced preservation motion pictures of Ed Emshwiller, Shirley Clarke and Manfred Kirchheimer, but not those of the National Trust.<sup>16</sup>

The British documentary does not attempt to buck progress and as such is cleverly positioned. "Progress and preservation," the narrator asks, "how do we hold a balance between them?" This utilization of the narrator as questioner has the additional effect of presenting him as fallible. As one of us, he does not have all the answers, lessening the perception of his omniscience. Unlike the National Trust-produced *How Will We Know It is Us?*, the narration of *A Future for the Past* creates the perception that the viewer is a discussant rather than a passive listener at a lecture. It also forces the viewer to consider, if for only the briefest of moments, the fact that there is, indeed, an unanswered question to be considered: "How **do** we decide what to keep?"

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix on Preservation motion pictures.





Through a clever use of animation and the example of one small building, *A Future for the Past* demonstrates to the viewer just how difficult it is to decide what to keep. The building is placed in a variety of design schemes, from a stand-alone siting, to part of a mid-block row, to part of a series of buildings which frame a public square. We are shown that the same building which appeared to be easily sacrificed as a stand-alone design would have been sorely missed when removed the middle of a block or the edge of a formal square. Through animation, the filmmakers were able to offer viewers a concrete example of a rather esoteric design concept and to encourage them to participate in a decision-making process. None of the National Trust films from *How Will We Know It is Us?* to the recently produced *America's Most Endangered 1996* has ever included such a sequence. The viewers of Trust-produced motion pictures have never been shown the considerations of urban design issues. Instead they have only been only shown the consequences.

The British documentary also explored the economic forces which introduce and shape community change. One scenario explored a stagnating economy and a dwindling tax base and their impact on the city, evidenced in building abandonment, neglect, and under-utilization of real estate. A second scenario examined the impact of a burgeoning economy and the concomitant pressure which growth can affect on the structure of a town: for example, increased traffic, loss of



farmland and increasing sprawl. Neither situation was presented as the result of a sinister hand but rather of morally neutral forces which inevitably followed on the heels of growth or decline. Viewers were presented with no bad guys and no straw men. Rather, they were confronted with the reality and complexity of political and economic decisions. This illustrates one of the most important strategies in creating an effective persuasive motion picture: the information presented must be based in fact, however emotionally weighted the argument.

A *Future for the Past* ended with a final call-to-arms far more powerful in intent than anything heard in *How Will We Know It is Us?*, or indeed, in any of the Trust-produced motion pictures. In the last frames of the motion picture, a graphic inscription reads "Action now - it's part of our heritage? How much do you care?" This line is also spoken, and thus reinforced, by the narrator. As music swells, the words grow bigger on the screen creating the illusion that they are moving towards us. Soon "**Do** you care?" are the only words which fit on the screen. The music continues and the graphic expands once again until the only word left is an enormous "**You!**" The expanding graphic creates the sense of a finger pointing directly at the audience, leaving little doubt as to exactly who bore the responsibility for these concerns. And the motion picture's final words further universalized its message. "Even though this film was made



in Britain," the narrator intoned, "it applies to other countries as well."

*A Future for the Past* illustrates several aspects of thoughtful, persuasive-motion picture production which are particularly instructive when contrasted with *How Will We Know It Is Us?* By focusing on the built environment specifically and avoiding people as much as possible the motion picture was not dated by changing styles and fashions. *A Future for the Past* eschewed case studies. Unlike *How Will We Know It is Us?*, it did not discuss a laundry-list of projects undertaken and results achieved. Instead, *A Future for the Past* attempted to present urban design problems, revealed their impact on historic structures and then proposed solutions which were sensitive both to the existing townscape and to progress. *A Future for the Past* did not present the issue of the destruction or preservation of historic buildings in an hysterical, "we must save everything" manner. The British documentary focused on presenting a logical case for their point of view and allowed the viewer make the final decision, whereas *How Will We Know It is Us?* attempted to tell the viewer what to think.

A specific weakness of *How Will We Know It is Us?*--and one which is repeated in other Trust-produced motion pictures--was a tendency to approach the subject of preservation as a "how-to" and present progress reports (what former New York City Mayor Ed Koch might have called "how'm I



doin's") for the National Trust. The Trust motion pictures offered viewers scenarios which were applied to specific towns rather than discuss more general situations which could help viewers determine what they needed to learn about their own town. *A Future for the Past*, over a quarter of a century old, is still instructive and persuasive primarily because it focuses on concepts and ideas and eschews the "how-to." It is a powerful call to arms in a way that *How Will We Know It is Us?* is not and represents one type of motion picture which is sorely lacking among the American-produced preservation and built-environment genre.

Documentary features like *How Will We Know It Is Us?* were not the only motion picture methods employed by the National Trust to persuade the public of the importance of preservation. The National Trust also produced a series of television commercials which functioned as public service announcements (PSA's) and which sought to focus public attention on various aspects of preservation.<sup>17</sup> One case in point was a short film produced in 1968 for the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit *Nineteenth Century America* which was altered to serve as a preservation PSA. The original motion picture, a dramatic and evocative montage of buildings being demolished, was underscored by a tolling bell. This eloquent

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<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, because these spots were produced without a dated copyright it is sometimes difficult to attribute an exact date to these motion pictures.





statement proffered a powerful visual and auditory message which transcended words. The viewer need not have asked for whom the bell tolled; the answer was self-evident.<sup>18</sup>

The PSA, entitled *Your Heritage* as released by the National Trust, was not the same eloquent statement as the film, however. The agency who produced the spot (or perhaps the Trust itself) could not allow the images and soundtrack to speak for themselves. Intercut with the motion pictures was graphic text which read "Going...Going...Going...Going ...Gone," thereby assuring that the public "got the message".<sup>19</sup> This faith in text and lack of confidence in the

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<sup>18</sup>This film, which was co-sponsored by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the National Trust was featured as part of the exhibit "The Rise of An American Architecture" which was one part of the larger presentation on 19th-century America. The National Trust helped assemble this footage of the buildings undergoing demolition which make up this persuasive motion picture essay. This film was eventually re-edited and released as a public service announcement entitled *Your Heritage* and was distributed to over 300 television stations, most probably also in 1968. Critically well received it was awarded the top prize at the Chicago International Film Festival in 1972 and was selected as best of a group of 80 commercials which aired during prime time in Chicago. In addition this PSA won a first prize for editing and a merit award for creative excellence in the United States Commercials Festival. See Elizabeth D. Mulloy, *The History of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*. Washington, The Preservation Press, 1976. 140

<sup>19</sup> This same "going...going...gone" graphic scheme is utilized in Constance Greiff's persuasive photo-documentary text, *Lost America: From the Atlantic to the Mississippi* (New York: Pine Press, 1971). In addition, one of the images offered as "gone" is the National Presbyterian Church in Washington DC. The image, that of a wreckers crane bucket toppling a spire, is also used in both the film and the PSA for the National Trust. Since the common use of the images and approaches can hardly be coincidence, there must have been some sharing of approaches between Greiff and the National Trust. Based on my research, there is no way to state whether Greiff borrowed from the PSA, the PSA borrowed from Greiff or they agreed to coordinate approaches. In any case, the certain date of Greiff's publication offers a better sense of the time frame of the PSA



ability of the motion picture alone to deliver the message is typical of the National Trust-produced films. The Trust-produced motion pictures typically included a plethora of complicated verbal information which intermixed philosophy, promotion of Trust programs, and illustrative case studies so that any persuasive message contained was often garbled.

In 1969, the National Trust produced a follow up PSA to *Your Heritage*. This 60 second motion picture about the Woodrow Wilson House was narrated by Burgess Meredith and was an early use of the celebrity testimonial as a part of the National Trust's advertising strategy. The utilization of a celebrity spokesperson is a common first tactic in advocacy campaigns, as Charles Salmon has pointed out, and is considered a necessary component of many campaigns and social movements.<sup>20</sup> However, David Ogilvy, founding partner of the worldwide advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather, observed that "research shows that commercials with celebrities are **below average** in persuading people to buy products...viewers tend to remember the celebrity and forget the product."<sup>21</sup> The Trust's willingness to employ such an ineffective means of public persuasion again and again illustrated just how bereft of ideas and ignorant of communications research the National Trust was--and remains. As recently as 1989, the National

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<sup>20</sup> Charles T. Salmon, "God Understands When the Cause is Noble". *Gannett Center Journal* Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 1990. 29

<sup>21</sup> David Ogilvy, *Ogilvy on Advertising*. (New York:Vintage Books, 1985) 8.



Trust's Program Council recommended that the Trust enlist a celebrity spokesperson to reach the public via television.<sup>22</sup> The more things change, perhaps, the more they remain the same.

Burgess Meredith was not the only celebrity spokesperson employed by the National Trust. Anne Baxter, a relative of Frank Lloyd Wright, also made a spot for the Trust. But perhaps the most recognizable spokesperson to donate her appeal to the preservation cause was Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Ms. Kennedy Onassis's first public advocacy of preservation came about rather tangentially though her involvement with the renovation of the White House during her husband's tenure as president. A CBS-produced television special, *A White House Tour with Mrs. John F. Kennedy*, introduced the First Lady's interest in historic architecture and decorative arts to an intrigued American viewing public. During that production, Mrs. Kennedy narrated a brief history of the White House and its subsequent architectural alterations and she conducted a tour of the newly renovated and reinterpreted house-museum. Based on her past interests, preservationist leanings and celebrity, Ms. Kennedy Onassis probably seemed an ideal spokesperson for the preservation cause. The short public service announcement in which she was featured was so bizarre that it bordered on surreal and

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<sup>22</sup>Gerald George (1990), 66.



it is difficult to imagine that it was effective as a piece of preservation advocacy.

The spot began with an actress, portraying a mother, carrying an antique doll with a porcelain china face. Ms. Kennedy Onassis, as narrator, read: "We realize how important it is to preserve a priceless heirloom." A child entered the frame and walked toward the mother while looking at the doll. Ms. Kennedy Onassis' voice-over continued: "It is our link with the past, to be proudly carried for our children and our children's children." But as the mother handed the child the doll it tumbled from her grasp. The next shot revealed the doll lying on the ground, a large chunk of its face broken off. Then, Ms. Kennedy Onassis breathily intoned: "It's heartbreaking if it is lost, even by accident." The image of the broken doll dissolved to reveal a ruined building. "But this is no accident," read Ms. Kennedy Onassis, "Everyday our heritage is being destroyed. Once destroyed it is gone forever." The PSA closed with a textual message which listed the address of the National Trust and urged the viewer to write for more information.

It is a bit difficult to pin down precisely what was the persuasive point of this spot. As mentioned previously, inclusion of a child and the implied parental responsibility that the child engenders is a popular propagandistic device when making a public appeal. It is probable that the Trust, in concert with the advertising agency who helped produce the





spot, saw this appeal as one which held high emotional resonance. But one wonders why we never saw Ms. Kennedy Onassis on camera; perhaps she was unwilling to be photographed. It seems a strange choice, however, to use the oft-photographed and attractive Ms. Kennedy Onassis as a voice-over narrator. Although her voice was distinctive it was her good looks and poised presence to which people responded most favorably.

It is important to note, however, that when this spot ended it delivered a graphic "call to action". This call to action required the viewer to write to the National Trust for information. Perhaps the average television viewer was more motivated during the late 1960's and the thought of writing a letter did not seem like such a great effort. But analysis of this "call for action" indicates how unlikely it was for such a spot to actually persuade a viewer to contact the National Trust. PSA's do not typically receive primetime rotation when commercial charges are at their premium. Since the PSA fills airtime which broadcasters provide gratis to fulfill FCC requirements, it is unlikely that the PSA will be seen by an extremely large audience. In addition, the call to action segment lasted 5 seconds and was placed at the end of the commercial. Even a viewer who **had** been deeply moved by this PSA, had to first recognize the call to action, then find a pencil and paper, copy down the address of the National Trust--all within the space of 5 seconds--and



finally remember to compose and post a letter requesting additional information. Are there any doubts why such appeals were often ineffective?

This sort of PSA, which required the viewer to respond to a "call to action" is referred to in advertising as a "direct response" appeal. David Ogilvy suggested that "the right kind of commercial" can persuade people to respond by writing or telephone. But he concluded that they must follow several rules to be effective. They should be two minutes long because "a commercial shorter than two minutes almost never produces profitable sales."<sup>23</sup> "You must allow, Ogilvy writes, "20 seconds to give information on how to order... long enough to give your toll-free phone number."<sup>24</sup> Although it is unfair to compare advertising strategies of 1970 to those of the 1990's, a typical PSA of today would include an 800-telephone number which would be graphically represented for most of the spot and reiterated by an announcer's voice: "The number to call is 1-800-PRESERV, that's 1-800-PRESERV." The likelihood of such a spot garnering viewer response is certainly greater. The more difficult it is for viewers to act on the call to action, the less likely they are to do so.

Although, the Trust also produced public service spots which publicized the National Trust property in Washington Decatur House but there is little known about any other Trust

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<sup>23</sup>Ogilvy (1985), 149.

<sup>24</sup>Ogilvy (1985), 149.



motion picture activity until the middle 1970's. The mid-70's saw an increased interest on the part of the National Trust to utilize motion pictures to promote the preservation message. As pointed out in the previous chapter, at this time preservationists were restructuring their policy thinking. Preservation, on both a philosophical and practical policy level, was shifting from an association with history to a more holistic "environmental" position. The motion pictures which the National Trust produced during the late 1970's were an attempt to inform the general public that they were no longer--in advertising sloganes--"your father's Trust."

According to Mary Means, a former National Trust staff member,<sup>25</sup> by the mid 1970's representatives of the National Trust were utilizing the British-produced *A Future for the Past* when conducting public outreach to interested preservation groups. The Trust-produced motion picture *How Will We Know It is Us?*, Trust staffers believed, was dated and did not accurately reflect both the philosophical and procedural changes which had taken place within the field of historic preservation. Although only three years more recent *A Future for the Past* was, in the view of some of the Trust staff, a more up-to-date and compelling film.

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Means began her career at the National Trust in 1973 as a Midwest Field Services representative. During her tenure at the National Trust she produced several motion pictures including *A Place in Time* and *Main Street*.



National Trust field representatives used motion pictures to introduce audiences to preservation concepts. The persuasive aspects of the motion picture, combined with the representative's presentation were calculated to gain the sort of public support necessary to build a preservation constituency at the grassroots level. Means suggested that field representatives found it embarrassing to show the British-produced preservation motion picture while attempting to persuade audience members of the value of the American built environment. So, as Means related, "it was time for an updated motion picture."<sup>26</sup>

The National Trust contacted John Karol, a former deputy tax commissioner and attorney from Vermont, to produce *A Place in Time*. Karol had previously produced a motion picture for the Society for Industrial Archaeology although, in actuality, it was a slide show transferred to 16-millimeter film. He had also produced a similar slide-to-film project entitled *So Goes Vermont* about land use conservation. While Karol's support of preservationist ideals rendered him an obvious choice for the Trust projects, he really had little experience directing motion pictures.

*A Place in Time* (1977) was an attempt to incorporate the evolving rhetoric of preservation as a "quality of life" issue into a persuasive motion picture. Clearly a more

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<sup>26</sup> Author Interview with Mary Means. March 10, 1995





sophisticated motion picture than *How Will We Know It is Us?*, *A Place in Time* addressed the way in which buildings communicate a "sense of time and place". The motion picture began with a montage of the London Bridge. The first shots showed the structure against a blue sky but eventually the camera revealed that the context in which the bridge existed was not London but Arizona, where the bridge had been relocated and reassembled. *A Place in Time* suggested that, divorced from their original context, buildings and, in this case, structures had little meaning.

The motion picture also explored some of the reasons why people preserve and included a brief history of preservation motivations and restoration philosophy. *A Place in Time* discussed restorations, such as Mount Vernon, which interpreted buildings to a particular time period, restorations projects associated with famous personages and military sites and ended with the Colonial Williamsburg restoration/re-creation. The motion picture asserted that such antiquarian and patriotic projects were important and attempted not to not alienate any viewer by denigrating these particular preservation motivations. It was clear, however, that this motion picture was intended to bring the public up to speed on more current preservation thinking. There was a definite boundary drawn between these more traditional projects and those which demonstrated where the field of preservation was going. This new preservation, as described



by the National Trust, "[took] place all around us" and was concerned with the "loss of place and urban identity."

Although this motion picture was more finely tuned than *How Will We Know It is Us?*, it nonetheless took a similar approach in its presentation of preservation. *A Place in Time* offered a series of case-studies which illustrated how preservation was working in a variety of communities. One segment, for example, explored an urban preservation project in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn called Weeksville. In this project a group of African-Americans were preserving one of the first free African-American settlements in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Considering its task, *A Place In Time* was a reasonably good motion picture. Like *How Will We Know It is Us?*, however, it suffered from an abundance of narrative information. *A Place in Time* presented a multitude of preservation programs and its attempts to explain some preservation concepts, especially the more environmentally-based and place-oriented ones, were just too complicated. *A Place In Time* addressed wetlands preservation, the establishment of historic districts and touched on a variety of legal and economic vehicles by which preservation was accomplished. Preservation strategies such as revolving

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<sup>27</sup> The topic of Weeksville had already been handled in a motion picture prior to *A Place in Time*. *Weeksville, Save the Memory of Self* was completed in 1976. Produced by Bobby Knight and Robert Thomas, it offered a compelling view of grassroots preservation and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.



funds, the development of "partnerships" and the writing of preservation easements-- complicated enough in print format-- were even harder to understand as explained in this motion picture.

*A Place In Time* offered a smorgasbord of preservation issues and solutions. Viewers could sample a variety of preservation concerns, find the one most applicable to their particular situation and select from a variety of potential solutions. Although this approach might have been effective with "grassroots preservationists," there were scant provisions made for a viewer who was not yet such a preservationist. There was little persuasive content in this motion picture; it was designed to teach the converted rather than preach to the uninitiated. As in *How Will We Know It is Us?* there was little appeal to people's emotions, in part because the filmmakers felt compelled to tell viewers everything there was to know about preservation, leaving little time for anything else. Almost 10 years had lapsed since the production of *How Will We Know It is Us?* and preservation had gone through an active period of redefining its mission. Understandably, the National Trust wanted to make sure that they informed everyone of these changes, but, unfortunately they used this motion picture for that end.

David Ogilvy has studied the common mistakes made by non-profit organizations when undertaking advocacy campaigns. He suggested that most advocacy advertising campaigns are



"addressed to the wrong audience, lack a defined purpose, don't go on long enough, are weak in craftsmanship and advocate a hopeless cause."<sup>28</sup> *A Place In Time* and the motion picture communication strategy it revealed suffer from most of these weaknesses. Clearly, *A Place In Time* addressed the needs of an audience who already had some knowledge of preservation and who was already disposed to agree with its message. In that sense, it sought the wrong audience. The motion picture (and perhaps this can be traced to John Karol's experience with slide presentations) relied heavily on narrative and textual information. There was no attempt on the part of the filmmakers to exploit the **motion** part of motion picture; to let the visual experience engage the viewer. And, finally, because the Trust waited so long between motion pictures, it was unable to build momentum among its presentations.

*A Place In Time* was distributed to 100 television stations and to 1000 organizations during the **year** following its production and an estimated 3 million viewers saw the motion picture.<sup>29</sup> (While the Trust proclaimed these numbers proudly, it must be pointed out that between 5 and 8 million viewers watch PBS' *This Old House* **each week**.) The production of *A Place In Time* was just one example of a burgeoning

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<sup>28</sup> Ogilvy, (1985) 126.

<sup>29</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. *Report to the President and the Congress of United States*. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1979), 74.





utilization of motion pictures by the National Trust. The organizations 1978 Annual Report stated that, "...through books, a magazine and newspaper, the news media, films, videotapes and speeches [the Trust] informs preservationists on new techniques and wins converts to the preservation cause."<sup>30</sup> To aid in this process, in 1979 the Preservation Press published a book entitled *Film, Etc.* Assembled by Don Tippman for the Educational Services Division of the National Trust, it listed over 1200 films and videos which had been produced on Historic Preservation and related subjects. (In fact, only about 44 of these films were--according to Tippmann's index--specifically related to preservation topics, and many of those were only tangentially related at best. The other 1156 were about related subjects.) By the time this publication was released, the National Trust had produced two motion pictures--*How Will We Know It is Us?* and *A Place in Time*--and was actively circulating both, as well as a number of the motion pictures listed in this catalogue, to the general public. In addition, the National Trust sponsored an annual film and video competition. The competition, which featured cash awards, was designed to "encourage productions by student and professional film-

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<sup>30</sup>The National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Annual Report*, 1978.  
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makers that visually interpret the preservation of the built environment of the United States."<sup>31</sup>

These films, plus any National Trust produced film, could be rented from the Trust's audio-visual collections department by interested groups. At the time *Film, Etc.* was compiled the future for audio-visual projects must have seemed bright indeed. The catalogue's forward predicted that "editions of this catalogue will be issued on a regular basis" and stated that "suggestions for additions to these [future] editions would be welcome."<sup>32</sup>

Just how quickly the Trust's commitment to the distribution of its audio-visual collection faded can only be assumed. A sheet attached to the frontispiece of *Film Etc.* announced that the distribution program was suspended in December of 1978 and "due to budget reductions for fiscal year 1980, [was] terminated by October of 1979."<sup>33</sup> In other words, by the time the publication was available to the public--the Trust's motion picture collection was not. Alternative distribution sources were listed for those persons interested in obtaining copies of the preservation motion pictures listed in the catalogue. The National Trust's commitment to motion pictures as a method of spreading the

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<sup>31</sup> Don Tippman, *Film, Etc.: Historic Preservation and Related Subjects*. (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press 1979), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Tippman (1979), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Tippman 1979. Statement attached to frontispiece prepared by Nancy Mellin, National Trust Audio-Visual Collection Assistant.



preservation message seems to have diminished considerably after this point. One reason offered for the disbanding of this project was growing budgetary problems within the Trust itself.<sup>34</sup>

Certainly the management of a motion picture collection was not an easy task. The logistics of storing, mailing, insuring and scheduling the films must have required an enormous commitment in terms of personnel, man-hours and space.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the National Trust's Film Library also suffered from bad timing. Within five years of the Trust's abandonment of its motion picture rental program, the VCR revolution had struck and virtually every household and organization in America had the means with which to access videotaped information.<sup>36</sup> The management of such a resource

<sup>34</sup> Author. Telephone interview with Dwight Young, National Trust, May 13, 1994.

<sup>35</sup> The remainder of the National Trust Film Library is now housed at the National Trust Archives at the University of Maryland in College Park. Most of the films are located in the slide-collection at the School of Architecture, a few are located in the audio-visual department at the library. The people who oversee the film collection, most notably Kris Kirwan and Chris Hinajosa, were very kind and extremely helpful to me during the course of my research. However, currently, there is no easy way to view this collection. Whether or not these films were terribly effective documents of preservation persuasion is beside the point. These films represent an important aspect of preservation history and offer preservation scholars, and scholars in general, for that matter, documents which provide much insight into how preservationists perceived themselves and how they attempted to spread the preservation message to the public at large. In some cases, the archive has only one copy of a film print, some of these films such as the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis spot have value beyond the purview of preservationists. If these films are lost or destroyed they cannot and will not be replaced. They deserve better.

<sup>36</sup> See Mark Nadel and Eli Noam, *The Economics of Physical Distribution: Video-cassettes/Discs and Movie Theater, An Anthology*. Research Working Paper. Columbia University, Center for Telecommunications and



would have been much simpler from all points of view, potentially reaching a greater audience at a fraction of the cost. Indeed, it might be a concept worthy of re-analysis for the preservation movement in general and the National Trust in particular.

Mary Means' experience with the production of *A Place In Time* convinced her of the potential for motion pictures to communicate the preservation message. When she was placed in charge of the Main Street Project, it was natural for her to repeat a tactic which she believed had been successful. Initially a prototype project to help small business districts, the Main Street Program typically worked with merchant associations and Chambers of Commerce. Armed with a \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Means and John Karol and began to develop a motion picture designed to investigate the problems facing "Main Street America" and offer preservation-based solutions. Even in 1978, however, \$20,000 did not buy much of a film. Fortunately, a vinyl siding and roofing product manufacturer, Bird and Sons,<sup>37</sup> saw potential in supporting a project which

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Information Studies. (New York: Columbia University, 1983) and Gladys D. Ganley, *Global Political Fallout: The VCR's First Decade*. (Cambridge: Ablex Publishing, 1987) for a more detailed discussion of the effects of the VCR on information distribution and viewership patterns.

<sup>37</sup> Companies that manufacture building products seem to be an obvious source for funding of such motion pictures. The public television program *This Old House* has long been funded by Stanley Home Products and Bob Vila's *Home Again* is sponsored by Sears. When preservationist seek to establish "partnerships" relationships such as these could prove fruitful.





discussed revitalizing -- and perhaps renovating -- Main Street. The additional funding from Bird and Sons allowed the Trust to expand the scope of its project--*Main Street*.

Means and Karol visited a number of small towns and shooting "before" and "after" footage of the Main Street program in action. *Main Street*, the motion picture, provided tangible evidence of the benefits enjoyed by those downtowns which had followed the Main Street program's guidelines. The motion picture revealed that in addition to aesthetic transformations, there was an economic benefit, as well. *Main Street*, unlike *How Will We Know It is Us?* and *A Place in Time*, was a very focused motion picture and was probably the most effective of the Trust films in achieving its goals. *Main Street* was one place where the National Trust's approach of presenting case studies and potential programs worked because it had a very specific audience in mind and it addressed a very specific problem. The intended audience for the motion picture were political and business leaders of small towns suffering economic hardship. Many of the people who saw *Main Street* were desperate for help. Most had already tried everything they knew to solve their economic problems and were willing to try anything which even hinted at a potential solution. This motion picture did not really attempt to sell the *idea* of preservation. Rather, it sold an economic revitalization plan in which preservation played a part.



Because it had received commercial sponsorship, *Main Street* was not eligible for national PBS release. PBS affiliates, however, could air the production provided that it was scheduled as a local program. And so, *Main Street's* national distribution was dependent upon affiliate scheduling. The Main Street Center recorded the public's response to the motion picture by tracking the requests for assistance which originated from those areas where the motion picture was broadcast.<sup>38</sup> Over 4000 calls requesting assistance from the Main Street Center were recorded in response to the local airings of *Main Street* on PBS.<sup>39</sup>

The budget cuts which eliminated the National Trust's film library spread to the Trust's motion picture development program. The next several years, encompassing most of the early 1980's, were fallow ones for motion picture production and the Trust contented itself with tracking historic preservation topics addressed by independent media. A 1981 Advisory Council Report proudly announced that WGBH's television series *This Old House*, which focused on building

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<sup>38</sup> This same method is used by direct marketing merchandisers to track the effectiveness of "call and response" advertisements on commercial broadcast and cable television stations. These direct advertising companies, in fact, shape their advertisements specifically for different areas of the country based on a record of past responses. In this manner, the marketers receive immediate feedback on the effectiveness of their pitches. If an advertisement receives insufficient response it is pulled from the rotation or altered until the public does respond. This information was gained in a telephone interview with Irving Levine, a commercial director for CCP, Inc. in Philadelphia PA, a firm whose specialty is the production of direct response commercials. June 13, 1995

<sup>39</sup> Author Interview with Mary Means (March 10, 1995)



restoration, was now receiving national distribution and was available in over 200 television markets across the United States. The report proudly noted that the situation-comedy *WKRP in Cincinnati*--a notably low-brow program--built an entire show around the topic of preservation and included a character who presented an editorial on the value of old buildings.<sup>40</sup>

Despite such ringing endorsements from pop-culture, the Reagan administration drastically cut funding to the National Trust in 1980 and the Trust was unable to consider any motion picture projects for the next three years. In 1983, however, motivated perhaps by the approaching election year, the Reagan administration approached the Main Street Program with a proposition. The Department of Agriculture offered the program \$500,000 to create a high visibility project. Means, as the Main Street Program's director, decided to produce a series of instructional videotapes to provide guidance for towns unable to attend national conferences or engage expensive consultants. As a capstone to this project Means, with the help of producer Peter Hawley, organized a national video tele-conference which was distributed via satellite to over 400 towns "from Maine to Maui."<sup>41</sup> Means suggested that

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<sup>40</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. *Report to the President and the Congress of United States*. The National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1981, 132.

<sup>41</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. *Report to the President and the Congress of United States*. The National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1984, 85.



"the incredible power of the medium" overcame the "parochialism of these little tiny towns" by showing them that their problems were shared by others. This exchange of information allowed each town to see solutions which had worked in other places and might be appropriate to their town as well, and it proffered the Main Street Program as the place to find help. After Mary Means left the National Trust in 1984, the National Trust for Historic Preservation undertook no other motion picture projects until a recent collaboration with the History Channel in 1996.<sup>42</sup>

Ironically, perhaps, the most influential motion picture utilized by the National Trust to proselytize for the cause of historic preservation in the United States was produced in Britain. As we have seen, *A Future for the Past* was more compelling than any of the motion pictures produced by the Trust. Because it addressed the problems of how to deal with aging buildings while allowing for growth and progress, it promoted the *idea* of preservation. The National Trust motion pictures really did not promote preservation--rather, they promoted the National Trust. Instead of actively advocating for American preservation, as charged in its mission statement, the National Trust promoted itself and its programs. Although it is not unrealistic for an organization

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<sup>42</sup>This collaboration *America's Most Endangered 1996* was produced by the History Channel for the National Trust for Preservation.





to do so, self-promotion was not the National Trusts primary responsibility.

The decision to focus on this sort of self-promotion did not rest solely with National Trust, however; consultants employed by the Trust recommended just such a course. In 1988, Hart Research Associates conducted a study to determine public attitudes toward the National Trust. Hart Associates concluded that the Trust needed to educate the public about the organization itself.<sup>43</sup> But, Gerald George, in his analysis of the Hart Report, suggested that their conclusions were erroneous. George suggested that the Hart Report's conclusions were based on a skewed sampling of people who were already predisposed to desire knowledge about the National Trust. The group of people polled for the Hart Study, George contended, were selected from mailing lists which included "members of local preservation organizations and others who [could] be expected to believe in the cause."<sup>44</sup> It was George's contention that, for preservation to be successful at the grassroots level, preservationists needed a

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<sup>43</sup>The source for this information was a report *Helping Grassroots Preservationists Succeed* prepared by Gerald George, a preservation consultant. Although I contacted the National Trust and was persistent in my requests I was denied access to the original 1988 Hart Associates report. I was finally informed by David Doheny, then Vice President and General Council for the National Trust, that only Vin Cipolla, director of communication could grant me access to these studies and that he refused to do so. My understanding of the Hart Report is based on an executive summary included in Gerald George's study.

<sup>44</sup>Gerald George, "Helping Grassroots Preservationists Succeed", *A Consulting Report to the National Trust for Historic Preservation*. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1990) 66



"stronger sell to the general public".<sup>45</sup> George concluded that "of all the preservation organizations the National Trust is in the best position to [meet] these needs." Since, George suggested, [the Trust] is "a non-governmental national organization mandated to promote historic preservation broadly," it was **the** logical organization to take responsibility for a stepped up campaign to win public sympathy for preservation in general. Secondly, he proposed, the National Trust was the "logical organization to lead in rectifying the lack of a central source of information" on preservation resources.<sup>46</sup>

While I agree with George's recognition of the need for a "stronger sell" to the general public, I do not agree with his recommendation of the National Trust as the leader of this effort. Of course, Gerald George was contracted by the National Trust and would, therefore, be predisposed to diplomacy. And, perhaps he had a minimal historical perspective on preservation rhetoric and Trust policy because his analysis and recommendations suggest George did not truly understand the Trust's role in the **creation** of this problem of poor public perception. If, as Trust policy literature had long suggested, the National Trust was the "spearhead of the American preservation movement on a national scale" whose role was "to mobilize and channel national sentiment and

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<sup>45</sup> George (1990) 64

<sup>46</sup> George (1990) 121-2.



opinion in support of historic preservation" and function as "a clearinghouse for preservation information" than it was **precisely** the National Trust which must have been responsible for a lack of public support for the preservation movement. If the public had been not persuaded than the National Trust as "mobilizer and channeler of public sentiment" had failed. If there was no central source for information, as George suggested, it was because the Trust had **already failed** to carry out its mission as a "clearinghouse". And yet, it was consultant George's recommendation that the National Trust was the perfect organization to rectify the perceptual problems for which the National Trust--by their own definitions--were most significantly responsible. As Kurt Vonnegut said, "and so it goes."

Perhaps it is time to carefully evaluate the advocacy and proselytizing role of the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the American preservation movement. Has the National Trust been as effective as possible in it's leadership role and if it has not, who should and realistically can replace them. The answers to these questions lie beyond the purview of this thesis. But an analysis of this problem of communication and its subsequent effect on public perception within the field of historic preservation has revealed these questions, and I believe they need to be seriously addressed and answered.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION MOTION PICTURES: THE UNAFFILIATED FILMS

The preponderance of motion pictures which deal specifically or, at least, tangentially with the topic of historic preservation fall into the "unaffiliated" category. The unaffiliated motion picture may have some aspect of historic preservation as its focus or attempt to address some aspect of historic preservation within the context of another subject. I have chosen the term unaffiliated because, in contrast to the motion pictures of The National Trust, these presentations make no overt claim of speaking for a larger preservation constituency, although some may, in the course of their rhetoric, do so. I have specifically eschewed the term "grassroots" motion pictures because while some were funded by small non-profit organizations several of the motion pictures which will be discussed were produced by large corporate media entities such as CBS and PBS - hardly "grassroots" organizations.

In fact, perhaps the earliest televised treatment of the subject of historic preservation--albeit a tangential treatment at best--came not from a grassroots preservation organization but from a bastion of corporate America: the





Columbia Broadcasting System. In 1948, structural engineers, in the course of a building inspection, realized that sagging floors and ceilings at the White House were a sign of underlying structural decay. There was some public discussion about what should be done to remedy the situation. Some advocated for demolition of the building and proposed the construction of an up-to-date structure on the site. Others--preservationists amongst them--lobbied for restoration of the existing White House. Although President Harry Truman realized that it would be more economical to build a new structure he noted that "there would be destroyed a building of tremendous historical significance in the growth of our nation. I am in favor", he declared, "of preserving our outstanding historical structures."<sup>1</sup>

On May 3, 1952 CBS News aired a live broadcast entitled *The President of the United States at Home* which featured President Truman. Hosted by a triumvirate of reporters, including the youthful Walter Cronkite and Eric Severeid, the telecast offered American viewers a tour of the recently completed White House restoration. While the telecast provided, perhaps, more information about the difficulties of live television production and its technical limitations circa 1952, it, nonetheless, introduced at least some of the

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<sup>1</sup> The News Division of the Columbia Broadcasting System. *The President of the United States at Home*, Broadcast date May 3, 1952. The Museum of Radio and Television Archives, New York.



notions of preservation and building conservation to a larger audience. Although most viewers were probably more interested in a behind the scenes look at the Truman's living quarters than a in a slender overview of historic preservation, concepts such as restoration, retention of original fabric and attention to historical detail were mentioned, though not explained.

The presentation was clumsy and unfocused. President Truman meandered through the building accompanied by one of the reporters. The reporter attempted keep the viewer spatially oriented by providing commentary about location. In addition, the reporters posed questions to the President which allowed him to provide historical background about the building and its interior. Or as Cronkite phrased it, "the President will guide us through the renovated but still history-filled rooms."<sup>2</sup> Although a current preservation scholar might find humor in the notion of Cronkite's portentous reading of "history-filled rooms" it is important that we do not overlook the significance of his comment. Cronkite's reading posited the notion that a building can be "renovated" and still retain its "history".

President Truman explained that some of the structural damage which plagued the White House could be traced to

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<sup>2</sup> The News Division of the Columbia Broadcasting System. *The President of the United States at Home*, Broadcast date - May 3, 1952, copyright The Museum of Radio and Television Archives, New York.



earlier renovation projects as well as to general wear and neglect. Truman informed viewers about the nature and extent of the White House's structural and interpretive problems and he explained the architectural and decorative solutions which the restorers applied. The original engineering study, Truman pointed out, recommended demolition of the structurally compromised sections of the White House. He stated that it was his belief--as well as that of his advisors--that the building was critical to the nation, and as the "nations house," it should be restored and/or renovated rather than replaced. The importance of a publicly broadcast imprimatur for such historic restoration cannot be underscored enough; presidential endorsement proffered a stamp of governmental approval upon at least some of the ideals of the nascent field of historic preservation.

In the course of the "tour," Truman touched upon a variety of issues which were to become part of the preservation canon. He introduced the concept of adaptive-use when he explained that an old boiler room, no longer needed to house mechanical systems, had been adapted into the new Diplomatic Reception rooms.<sup>3</sup> Truman also discussed the notion of "recycling historic fabric" when he explained that building stones which had been removed and buried during an

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<sup>3</sup> The Diplomatic Reception Rooms, themselves, would become the subject of a preservation motion picture in 1990. See Appendix *America's Heritage: The Diplomatic Reception Rooms of the United States Department of State*.



earlier renovation were cleaned and reincorporated into a new door surround during the current project.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that although these preservation concepts were introduced, this broadcast was in no way an historic preservation primer, nor was it intended to be. The broadcast revealed, perhaps more than anything, that neither Cronkite as primary interviewer nor President Truman as guide had much knowledge of either history or historic restoration. But this knowledge should not dilute the significance of this program in any way, for the level of understanding of preservation topics exhibited by the principle performers was probably not that different than that of the general American public. Indeed, this broadcast took place only 16 years after the restoration/recreation of Colonial Williamsburg and was, most probably, the first motion picture, based, broadcast presentation of a preservation topic--however tangential.

Near the end of the 1950's a motion picture documentary was released in the United States whose title, *Skyscraper* suggested that its concerns could not be farther afield from those of the nascent preservationists. Directed by Willard Van Dyke and Shirley Clarke, this 15-minute, black and white-motion picture followed the process of the construction of





the Tishman Building, an international-style skyscraper built at 666 Park Avenue in New York City.<sup>4</sup>

The motion picture opened with a montage of obliquely-angled images of tall glass and steel International-style buildings while a sort of "hip-cool" jazz tune formed the soundtrack. A vocalist began to sing and the juxtaposition of the lyric with the images offered some insight into the filmmaker's point of view. "Magic city climbing high, shining walls reflect the sky", sang vocalists Gene Mumford and John Sylvester, while are shown angular modernist buildings. The shots and lyrics continue:

Magic city in the sun, has the darkness on the run.  
We're building bright this city, light this city  
now. Were going to chase the shadows, erase the  
shadows from this city now.<sup>5</sup>

In the second verse, the tone of the lyrics and the images changed. Shots of a high rise apartment whose windows

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<sup>4</sup> G. Roy Levin, *Documentary Explorations; 15 Interviews with Film-makers*. Garden City Press: New York, 1971. 187 The genesis of this motion picture can be traced to a film competition begun by Phyllis Lambert to attract filmmakers to document the construction of Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson's Seagram Building. Willard Van Dyke became interested in a motion picture exploration of skyscraper construction while developing his proposal for the Seagram project. When that competition was awarded to film-makers Ricky Leacock and Henwar Rodakiewicz, Van Dyke began to search for another skyscraper to film. John Tishman, who was developing a project for 666 Park Avenue, expressed interest in a motion picture documentation of his building and the project was begun. 18 months into the filming Van Dyke, who had prior commitments, left *Skyscraper* in the hands of another director, Shirley Clarke, for completion. Although both names appear on the credits as director, Van Dyke would later claim that it was "Shirley Clarke's film basically."

<sup>5</sup> John White. Lyrics to "Magic City", music by Teo Macero, in the motion picture *Skyscraper* Shirley Clarke and Willard Van Dyke, 1959.



are filled with hundreds of air-conditioners are juxtaposed with images of buildings which feature sleek fenestration and steel--miracles of modern heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems. All the while, the lyrics intone "Air-conditioned rooms we see, vanish ancient history." This last section of lyric was punctuated with shots of elegantly detailed wrought-iron grille work, classically inspired columns and architraves and Sullivanian organic ornament while the lyric continued: "Old facades must pass away, like the horse they've had their day." Images of elaborately detailed masonry and Victorian Gothic buildings are shown crumbling under the weight of a wrecking ball while the vocalist jived:

Old walls tumbling into dust, signs proclaiming 'dig' we must. All that's good (or stood)<sup>6</sup> is falling fast, we're removing from the past.

While Clarke's film, at least superficially, appeared to explore the process of the building of a skyscraper it may be that she had an entirely different agenda in mind. Although the film initially appears to be a paean to modernism it may be that Clarke questioned the process of development and the effects it had on a city. Lines such as "we take a city block and tear it down, we put a new skyscraper in the ground" or

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<sup>6</sup> Multiple screenings of this section of the film cannot clear up the precision of this lyric. The word remains indeterminable as either good or stood.



"you know, this building was built all over the country" were somewhat ambiguous and depended on where the viewer stood on the issue of development for interpretation. Willard Van Dyke, interviewed later in his career, suggested that Clarke's intent was to call into question the effect of such development. "Shirley intended [the motion picture] as a kind of satire. It doesn't quite come off this way, but she hoped you [the viewer] would see underneath the surface of such things."<sup>7</sup> Van Dyke's assessment of the motion picture calls into question the identification of *Skyscraper* as pro-development, or even as merely an interesting story about building construction. It suggests that Clarke's agenda may well have been pro-preservation and/or anti-development.

Based on the sorts of images Clarke chose to include, I contend that this film was indeed pro-preservation in intent. That Clarke included shots of buildings which featured rich architectural detail and showed them falling under the weight of the wrecking ball suggests that she might have felt that something vital and beautiful was being lost. The first section of the motion picture after the title sequence opened with a view of an active demolition site; the camera played over the shards of the demolished building. The narration read: "then the old buildings were torn down" and we see hands flipping through a stack of photographs of the

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<sup>7</sup>Levin (1971), 188.



demolished buildings--hands without a face. The hands then drew a large black "X" through two of the facades in the photographs. If the film-maker intended a pro-development message these sequences could easily have been excluded, at no cost to the story of the developing skyscraper. The motion picture could have begun with plans on a drawing board and proceeded to a cleared lot in the process of excavation. The ambiguity of the demolition sequences would certainly have been avoided and there would have been no doubt about the film-makers intent.

That Clarke included these sequences, combined with Van Dyke's comments, leads me to conclude that it was her intent to make a pro-preservation--or at the very least anti-change--statement within the context of a film which was funded by the very people who were causing the demolition.<sup>8</sup> This would have been a very fine line to walk and the film-maker would have had to carefully send this message without appearing to bite the hand that fed her. Because Clarke's comments are subtle and subversively included, it is possible to read the film in a variety of ways. This is why Van Dyke concluded that the satire doesn't quite "come off.". Nonetheless, Clarke's film may quite possibly be the first social

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<sup>8</sup> Clarke's narrative treatment allowed actors speaking as the various workmen and designers to "tell" their parts of the story. The actors spoke in their approximation of the voices of the steelworkers, elevator installers, engineers and architects to illustrate the collaborative and cooperative nature of construction. The film was funded by a consortium formed by the developer Tishman and included Bethlehem Steel, the elevator manufacturers, and the like.





documentary which called into question precisely what was lost in a cityscape when development took place. Clarke's motion picture also pointed out how social documentary without a **clear-cut** point of view can be misunderstood and hence, ineffective. This same lack of a clear-cut point of view born, perhaps, of a desire not to offend, can be seen in a number of preservation documentaries, particularly those produced by the National Trust.

The early 1960's--1962 in particular--experienced an increased interest in the topic of preservation from a motion picture perspective. Ed Emshwiller, a West Coast film-maker, created a film which depicted the destruction of an elaborately decorated, vernacular Victorian-era house. The soundtrack featured no narration and consisted only of the sounds of power saws and of a heartbeat which grew progressively fainter. Emshwiller's portrayal was primarily an artistic treatment rather than an overt social documentary but nonetheless it made a powerful statement about destruction. Although Emshwiller's film dealt with some topics critical to preservationists, it is impossible to discern whether his intent was to advocate for the notion of preservation or poetically bemoan the concepts of loss and destruction.

Perhaps the most widely viewed preservation-oriented motion picture of the early 1960's was another CBS project which focused on the Kennedy Administration's renovation and



re-decoration of the White House interior. *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* aired on CBS for the first time in 1962. The black and white videotaped production was hosted by Charles Collingswood, produced by Perry Wolff and directed by Franklin Schaeffer.<sup>9</sup> *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy*, although not strictly a preservation production was, nonetheless, concerned with tangential preservationist issues. The White House is, after all, a national house-museum of sorts and the topic specifically dealt with renovations and interpretation.

Within the first few minutes of the broadcast, as she related a brief history of the White House and its renovations over the years, Mrs. Kennedy stated that "The White House is the property of the nation and, so far as it is compatible with living therein, it should be kept as it originally was."<sup>10</sup> Although preservationists today might argue with the content of Mrs. Kennedy's comment, it was nonetheless preservationist in tone and somewhat reflective of the state of preservation philosophy at the time. Later in the broadcast while describing the plan for restoration, Mrs.

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<sup>9</sup> Unlike the Truman House Tour, 10 years earlier, this program was not live, it was edited on videotape. And although it was ostensibly a production of the News Division, CBS included a "disclaimer" which acknowledged that the show was edited. More importantly, from a journalistic standpoint, CBS acknowledged that the questions were cleared with Mrs. Kennedy beforehand.

<sup>10</sup> Columbia Broadcasting System. *A White House Tour with Mrs. John F. Kennedy*. News Division. 1962. The Museum of Radio and Television Archives, New York.



Kennedy stated that, "this house has always grown and should. It just seemed such a shame to me, that when we came here, to find hardly anything of the past in the house"<sup>11</sup>. Although Mrs. Kennedy's approach--and that of the Kennedy Administration's advisors--clearly focused on the decorative arts, she, nonetheless, included architectural concerns and espoused aspects of preservation philosophy, some of which the viewing public had probably never heard before. This telecast not only introduced concepts of preservation to a larger public but posited the notion that "correct" preservation was the province of experts. The official imprimatur conferred by this presidential/governmental association marks the rise of a new preservation elite.

Mrs. Kennedy, through the questioning of interviewer Charles Collingswood, was able to articulate much about the restoration process and professional practice. She explained the importance of historical research as well as the utilization of historical graphic representation as a means to understand the building's appearance at various points in history. Mrs. Kennedy further explained the interaction of the multi-disciplinary team of advisors, including the work of historians, architects, and conservators. As she related the history of the White House she told the viewing public about the history of renovations at the White House and she

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<sup>11</sup> *White House Tour*, 1962.



exposed them to the notion of building stewardship as an ongoing, organic process.

Although there are no advertisements within the program itself there were clearly several agenda's which played a role in this telecast. On the one hand, this White House restoration was a bit of a political football. It was an expensive affair and, possibly, the Kennedy Administration saw this program as an opportunity to make a public appeal for the importance of the project. In addition, the interpretive team was actively seeking donations of decorative arts with a White House provenance. The "tour" offered them a vehicle in which to make a wide scale appeal for donations. For example, Mrs. Kennedy singled out a donor who had made a gift of some furniture without being dunned, "I wish there were more people like Mrs. Naun", Mrs. Kennedy breathily intoned. The "tour" also allowed Mrs. Kennedy, and her committee (which was headed by Henry Frances DuPont of the Winterthur Museum, in Delaware) to publicly acknowledge the list of donors.

Although this motion picture was not intended to introduce the American public to preservationist thinking circa 1960, it--perhaps unintentionally--did so. Whether a viewer tuned in to hear about building restoration, decorative arts or merely to see Jacqueline Kennedy's taste in fabric, they were nonetheless exposed--perhaps for the first time--to preservation concepts. Within the course of





the program, Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Collingswood touched on the importance of building preservation, the role of historical research in the preservation process, the importance of assembling a team of professionals to guide the process, the need for public involvement and the value of such cultural heritage to the formulation of an American sense-of-self. And, as such, it was the first widescale introduction of preservation concepts to the American public via the broadcast medium.<sup>12</sup>

It was not until the National Trust for Historic Preservation produced *How Will We Know It is Us?* in 1968 that a social documentary completely dedicated to the cause of preservation appeared. Also in 1968, the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University produced a time-lapse study of house-moving; a New England farmhouse was rescued by relocation. (Although relocation is considered a less than ideal method of preservation by contemporary standards, it was, and is, a preservation method nonetheless.) But it was not until the 1970's that preservation motion pictures truly multiply. In the first two years of the 1970's, more preservation motion pictures were produced (5) than in the entire previous decade. These motion pictures illustrated a

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<sup>12</sup> While the Truman White House tour of 1952 was the earliest telecast to contain some preservationist content it must be remembered that broadcast television itself was less than 10 years old and the audience for this show was probably very small. In addition, the level of preservation thinking discussed with in the Jacqueline Kennedy tour was more sophisticated and formed a greater part of the broadcast content.



broadening of the scope of preservation as a profession as well as underscored its increasing interest to motion picture producers as a potential topic. Two motion pictures produced in 1970 illustrate this increasing awareness of historic preservation as a means of civic alteration.

A *City is People*, produced by Stuart Finley, documented aspects of the revitalization of sections of Washington, DC both through federal intervention with urban renewal projects and private preservation schemes which attempted to improve the urban core. *Faneuil Hall Markets*, produced by Urbanimage, dealt with a history of the Boston food markets, explored the reasons for their decline and analyzed the impact of their rehabilitation. While these motion pictures indicated an awareness that preservation could impact the urban core, the effect such motion pictures had on the larger community remains unclear. There is little available information beyond a cursory examination of the topics of such films, and virtually no information about their distribution or presentation.

As *Papa Wanted It*, produced by Jody Saslow as a project for the Graduate Film School at New York University, is particularly well made and represents one sort of 1970's-era, independently-produced preservation motion picture. Saslow's motion picture focused specifically on the preservation and restoration of one building: the Samuel Treadwell Skidmore/Old Customs House in New York City. Shot entirely on



16-millimeter black-and-white film, Saslow's treatment offered an impressionistic view of the process of restoration and preservation. In popular verité style, Saslow eschewed a narrator and the story--unlike the treatment of the National Trust's documentaries--was told through the use of edited interviews with the principal characters. The technical quality of this motion picture was not of the highest order. The soundtrack was occasionally difficult to understand and an over-reliance on close-up images sometimes robbed the viewer of a sense of space. Yet the film was compelling in a way that the Trust-produced motion pictures were not.

*As Papa Wanted It* offered preservation from a personal, rather than an institutional, point of view and that was its primary value. Saslow's motion picture offered a glimpse at the complexity of an historically-precise building restoration. She used historical images to help illustrate the variety of incarnations the building had experienced over the years. Through this motion picture, we meet the fundraisers, architects, historians, public officials and volunteers required to make historical restoration successful. *As Papa Wanted It* presented a real nuts-and-bolts picture of the restoration process. However, although it represented a very common type of restoration--the establishment of a Federal-era house museum--it was not reflective of the policy-level changes which were occurring within the professional preservation movement. In fact, *As*



*Papa Wanted It* illustrated that, although policy-level thinking advocated "community preservation" and espoused environmentalist values, rank-and-file preservationists were still actively restoring iconic buildings which reflected a link to history with a capital "H". The Old Custom House, the topic of Saslow's motion picture, was a high-style building and the restorers were involved in a presumably expensive restoration. This motion picture documented one particular sort of preservation which, as Charles Hosmer pointed out, has accounted for the majority of preservation undertaken in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

The year 1974 was particularly fruitful for preservation motion pictures for it also marked the debut of the PBS-produced series *This Old House*. Produced and directed by Russell Morash for WGBH in Boston, this nationally distributed series focused (and continues to focus) on building "renovation, restoration, and remodeling." The concept of the program was simple enough. Viewers were invited, via motion picture camera, to watch homeowners--supported by a barrage of mechanics, architects, historical advisors and decorators--renovate or restore their particular "old house".<sup>14</sup> *This Old House*, while ostensibly a how-to show, never intended to teach people how to renovate old houses.

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<sup>13</sup> Charles B. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949, Volume II*, (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1981), 1054.

<sup>14</sup> As of this writing the program has been on the air for over 22 years.





"Few of us will be able to draw.. enough actual information [from the techniques demonstrated on *This Old House*] to do it ourselves" said Russell Morash, the shows creator. Morash developed the program to show the viewer how "the job [was] done...The larger benefit seems to be [that *This Old House*] helps people to understand construction and, perhaps, become better informed consumers."<sup>15</sup>

Preservation has never completely embraced *This Old House*, however. Many in the field have complained, for example, that the program offered dubious preservation information. Sara Chase, a former conservator for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, was occasionally featured on *This Old House* and she recognized both the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Chase suggested that preservationists who pushed for "grassroots" involvement should recognize in a show like *This Old House* the fruition of their efforts. *This Old House* offers a forum where preservation--or aspects of it--can be discussed at the "national dinner table". But, she acknowledged, some preservationists may believe that it offers "pop versions which obscure restoration complexities." Chase agreed that *This Old House* raised serious questions and she pointed out several problems the series presented for preservationists. The producers, she asserted, lack solid architectural

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<sup>15</sup> Jon Lender, "This Old House and its how-to TV Clones" in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 19, 1993



historical knowledge; they allowed for compromises between preservation concerns and the homeowners' desire for modernization. Finally, Chase pointed out that information which is considered relevant by preservationists is often deemed arcane by the producers and left out.

Although Chase's points are well taken they do not tell the whole story. The producers of *This Old House* do not attempt to pass off their renovations as restoration work. The buildings renovated and occasionally restored on *This Old House* are rarely architectural gems. Although some of the buildings featured are occasionally of "historical significance" or are "architecturally distinguished," they are typically vernacular versions of higher style houses. Some of these houses are altered to make them adaptable and amenable to modern dwellers but it is in the nature of architecture--and ostensibly, preservation-- to allow for change. Although preservationists should not minimize Chase's criticisms, perhaps they should also consider the quality of the buildings to which such high standards are applied and lower the bar when the situation demands it. In fact, some telecasts of *This Old House* have included segments which feature preservation professionals performing high-quality architectural restoration on high-quality buildings. Indeed, this program has, on occasion, provided a forum for preservation professionals to promote their work.



*This Old House*, perhaps more than any other motion picture that addresses preservation concerns, illustrates the gulf which exists between some preservationists and the general public. This television show has continued to be extremely popular while preservation, as a movement, has not. Preservation is concerned with "conserving built-environment resources" and, as Sara Chase concluded "*This Old House* provides workable examples of how old houses can be both preserved and comfortable."<sup>16</sup>

Preservationists must consider the number of viewers who tune into *This Old House* on a weekly basis. Considered to be the progenitor of the spate of how-to programs now available on television, *This Old House* is broadcast 568 times each week and is one of PBS's most popular shows. An analysis of the Nielson ratings reveals that 5% of television households in America tune in to *This Old House* each week. If roughly 87 million people watch public television each week, as many as 4.4 million viewers could be exposed to the information provided by each episode of *This Old House*. To put this number in preservation perspective, this amounts to more than 15 times the yearly membership of the National Trust **each week.**

According to the A. C. Neilson reports, during the 1994 season approximately 5.8 million viewers watched each

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<sup>16</sup> Sara Chase, "My Fling with Fame" in *Historic Preservation*. January February 1988. 59



telecast of *This Old House* and 9% of this audience were minority viewers. During the same season 82% of all viewers of the program were high school graduates or better and 45% of that same audience had attended or graduated from college and earned an annual income of more than 40,000 dollars per household. The audience for *This Old House* is a fairly well-educated and well heeled lot who are interested in renovating old houses and, it would seem, predisposed to at least **consider** aspects of preservation.<sup>17</sup>

Preservationists must reflect on exactly what is so bad about a popular culture version of preservation. Roughly 5 million people per week are becoming sensitized to built-environment concerns, even if the preservation practiced is not necessarily perfect. If some of these viewers decide, based on their exposure to *This Old House*, that renovating an older structure is worth considering, hasn't such a program been successful from a preservationist point of view? For many Americans, programs like *This Old House* offer the only exposure they will have to architectural and social history in a built-environment context, however imperfect. Should the professional preservation movement ignore them merely because they are less sophisticated about preservation rules and concerns? Perhaps, as Sara Chase has pointed out, *This Old*

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<sup>17</sup> This information was culled from a variety of sources, *Public Broadcasting and You*, A pamphlet. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Washington, DC. 1992 and *The PBS National Demographics Cume Report for This Old House*, which are based on the A.C. Nielson ratings. PBS Research, Alexandria VA, 1995.





House is not the perfect reflection of preservation sentiments but how perfect must preservation be in an imperfect world? If, as Robert Venturi suggested, Main Street is "almost alright" perhaps a forum such as *This Old House* should be considered "almost alright enough" for preservation professionals.

Standing in stark contrast to the commercially-produced *This Old House*, the artful appeal of Jody Saslow's *As Papa Wanted It* and the instructional approach demonstrated in the National Trust-motion pictures is *Weeksville: Save the Memory of Self*. Produced in 1976 by Bobby Knight and Robert Thomas, *Weeksville* told the story of the volunteers and community advocates who were preserving and restoring Weeksville, a small 19th-century community begun by free-African-Americans in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York.<sup>18</sup>

*Weeksville* is a particularly important motion picture for several reasons. It is, perhaps, the **only** motion picture in the preservation oeuvre to feature African-Americans actively engaged in the process of preservation. The National Trust's *How Will We Know It Is Us?*, for example, featured African-Americans whose neighborhood was impacted by gentrification. The Trust production did not present African-

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<sup>18</sup>The funding of *Weeksville*, was, like many other preservation motion pictures of the 1970's, fueled, in part, by Bicentennial fervor. Virtually any public project involved with history was a ripe topic for funding as the nation approached the Bicentennial. The film, which was produced for 5000 dollars, was funded by the New York State Council for the Arts.



Americans as a group of people with a past they wanted to preserve. Rather, they were portrayed as people in need of protection from the effects of gentrification. *Weeksville*, however, depicted a predominantly African-American community with not only a past to preserve, but the community wherewithal to marshall the process. *Weeksville* offered a view of active "community preservation" and, although not a technically sophisticated motion picture, it is, nonetheless, compelling. Knight and Thomas created a plausible filmic past through use of historical photographs. *Weeksville* revealed volunteers engaged in archeological work at the site, as well teaching what would later be called "heritage education" classes for young children and teen-agers.

This motion picture remained a part of the information arsenal of the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant and is currently utilized in both outreach and educational activities.<sup>19</sup> When it was first produced, however, *Weeksville* was used extensively for fundraising as well as educational purposes. This short motion picture, asserted Joan Maynard, executive director of *Weeksville*, brought *Weeksville* to the attention of the National Trust.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, the National Trust included a three minute segment about the *Weeksville* project in the Trust-produced

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<sup>19</sup> Author interview with Joan Maynard, Executive Director of *Weeksville*. November 22, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Author Interview, November 12, 1996.



motion picture *A Sense of Place*. This inclusion in the National Trust motion picture gave Weeksville a greater exposure to a national audience, something, Maynard asserted, which might have never occurred without the original *Weeksville* production.

*Newburyport, A Measure of Change* explored similar issues as *Weeksville*: preservation on a community rather than single-building scale. The challenges of preservation in an economically viable area such as Newburyport, Massachusetts were quite different from those faced in an economically less viable one such as Weeksville. *Newburyport, A Measure of Change* explored the role which preservation played in the revitalization efforts of a small New England coastal town. Written and produced by Lawrence Rosenblum for Urbanimage Films and funded by a grant for the National Endowment for the Arts, the motion picture documented the role which preservation could play as an urban planning tool. Newburyport, a prominent 18th century seaport, underwent a slow economic and physical deterioration. In the 1960's, citizens and local government hoped federal urban renewal projects would help to deliver the town from economic malaise. What happened instead, the motion picture asserted, was a loss of historic building fabric with no concomitant increase in economic health. Disenchanted local residents and a downtown merchants association eventually explored the



possibility of capitalizing on the existing historic fabric to assist in revitalizing the town.

The motion picture utilized the standard treatment of historic images in the form of prints, etchings and old photographs to establish the history of the town. Rosenblum employed an animation sequence to inform viewers how the historic fabric of the town had been altered by urban renewal. A similar use of animation depicted the approach which historic preservation planners employed to re-establish links to the historic past and to interweave new fabric into the town. The motion picture underscored the importance of both public-private partnerships and citizen education in the context of widescale urban preservation projects.

*Newburyport: A Measure of Change* illustrated that preservation could be applied successfully on an urban scale. Reflecting changes in preservation rhetoric, *Newburyport: A Measure of Change* portrayed preservation as a viable planning tool which could offer substantial economic benefits. The motion picture revealed that the town of Newburyport was transformed, both aesthetically and economically, through preservation intervention. *Newburyport: A Measure of Change* was a well-made and extremely persuasive advocate for preservation as an economic force. But *Newburyport* was also a potentially dangerous motion picture in part because it offered viewers **such** a persuasive preservation success story.





Like the historic tax credits themselves, *Newburyport* might have unintended consequences.

*Newburyport: A Measure of Change* presented the story of an extremely successful urban revitalization which prominently featured a preservation component. But it did not tell the complete story and in that lay the danger. The *Newburyport* revitalization was also successful because of factors in addition to the preservation intervention. On the ocean within 60 miles of a major city--Boston, Massachusetts--*Newburyport* featured marvelous geographical and locational advantages. The interstate highway system had recently made access easier and, hence, a more viable destination for tourists. And, furthermore, during its heyday, *Newburyport* was an affluent community and was blessed with high quality existing building fabric to combine with its whaling/shipping heritage. These factors contributed mightily to the success of the revitalization effort, factors which the motion picture does not address. It was more than the refurbishing of historic structures and a re-design of traffic flow patterns which accounted for the "*Newburyport* success story".

*Weeksville* and *Newburyport* provide an interesting comparison. The production quality of *Newburyport* is higher than that of *Weeksville*, probably due to a larger budget. And, although *Newburyport* tells a compelling story, one cannot overlook the fact that *Newburyport* was transformed



into a tourist destination. That is not to decry the inevitable alterations to a community that tourism brings. Only the residents of Newburyport can decide whether its transformation into a tourist destination was a positive outcome of the preservation intervention. Rather, it serves to point out that the "preservation" of Newburyport was successful, in a large part, precisely because it possessed the raw materials necessary to become a viable tourist destination. *Newburyport: A Measure of Change* was such a well-produced, persuasive motion picture it could convince similarly distressed citizens to follow Newburyport's methods in their town. If the community lacked the natural and architectural advantages which Newburyport boasted, however, the results could be disastrous.

Weeksville, on the other hand, presented us with an attempt by a preservationally marginalized group to preserve an important early African-American settlement in the United States. But Weeksville is located in an economically disadvantaged section of a dense metropolitan core (New York City) and the modest vernacular buildings, although painstakingly restored, are of historic interest only. It is highly unlikely Weeksville will ever become a major tourist destination. Although it is pointless to debate which of these projects is more important, it is nonetheless intriguing that Weeksville, which still struggles to survive, is one of a very few African-American museum settings in the



United States (one of eight when the motion picture was made). At the same time, Newburyport was merely one of a large number of New England shipping towns which had compelling 18th and 19th-century building fabric. The juxtaposition of these two motion pictures illustrates clearly that marketability is a significant factor in preservation's successful contribution to economic vitality.

During the 1980's, architectural motion pictures came of age as even local television broadcast outlets explored the programming potential of preservation. One notable foray into architectural/preservation education was undertaken by WNEW, a CBS affiliated television station in New York City. In a series of informational "commercials" each lasting 60 seconds, this television station looked at, among other topics, historic architecture. The 60 second spots exposed the New York television viewers to both preservation rhetoric and architectural "education," albeit in tiny increments. Viewers were encouraged to explore a city in which "each block is an architectural delight." Vignettes featured such buildings as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the Dyckman House-Museum and the Old Custom House (the subject of the previously discussed motion picture *As Papa Wanted It*) as well as urban areas such as Jersey City and Old Westbury Gardens. Preservationist rhetoric was reflected in statements like "thanks to concerned citizens some buildings have escaped demolition". These *Big Apple Minutes* were hardly



capable of providing much in the way of either rhetoric or education. But they served, nonetheless, to place the issue of preservation before those viewers who weren't using the time to get another beer from the refrigerator. In this way the spots functioned in an agenda setting capacity.

Two motion pictures of the 1980's require particular mention since both were "Hollywood" feature films which played upon popular notions of the preservation process. Both motion pictures were particularly "low-brow" vehicles produced primarily for a youth audience. The first, *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo* (1984), was a Golan-Globus production which capitalized on the then-popular fad of "break dancing."<sup>21</sup> The motion picture was little more than a series of "rock videos" loosely held together by a story.

It is this loosely knit story which should be of greatest interest to preservation scholars. In the motion picture, a group of community activists reclaim a 19th-century, classically-inspired building and renovate it (or perhaps establish an "adaptive-use" for it) as a community center. The entire community, which is predominantly African and Hispanic-American pitches in to refurbish the structure. Rather than follow the Secretary of the Interiors' Guidelines for restoration however, they choose to paint the building in

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<sup>21</sup> Break dancing was a particularly urban form of dance expression in which participants created acrobatic routines based on "flash" moves. Break dancing coincided with the emergence of Rap music as a cultural phenomenon.





bright colors. ("Improperly restored" Victorian houses which exhibited just such a bold palette were castigated as "psychedelic fun and games" in the National Trusts' *How Will We Know That It Is Us?* ) And, although the building seems to knit the community and provide them with a gathering place, various city powers are angered. A series of impediments is placed in the way of the community leaders which threatens to relieve them of their "center". The city zoning board, the historical commission and a real estate developer conspire to force condemnation proceedings on the building. Of course, in typical Hollywood fashion our heroes--the community--eventually prevail and the motion picture ends quite happily, with the rescinding of the demolition permit.

So, one might ask, what is the motion picture's significance to historic preservation? Several important points are revealed in the motion picture. First, it is important to note that at no time during the course of the "rehabilitation" of the 19th-century structure do we see the community group seek or receive assistance from any sort of preservationist. Second when we do see the sorts of people who might provide potential preservationist influences, (i.e. historians, architects, and the city zoning board) they are all portrayed as forces of resistance and oppression rather than as facilitators in the communities "adaptive-use" efforts.



To be fair, the "preservationists" in this motion picture function specifically as strawmen for the community to knock over on their way to success. This should not detract from the more critical issue, however. The filmmakers could have chosen **any** sort of strawmen to create impedimenta, but they chose preservation sorts. The producers, I am certain, had no intention of losing money on this production and would want to attract the widest possible audience. Their broadly brushed villains had to be strawmen which the majority of the audience would be able to easily dislike. And these villains--people who used their power and influence not to help community efforts but hinder and destroy them--prominently featured "preservationists". While it would be unfair to ascribe undue significance to the filmmakers inclusion of "preservationists" in the group of villains, it does establish that preservation and the preservation establishment was deemed familiar to a wide audience and without enough popular positive image to rebut their portrayal as the enemy.

The second Hollywood motion picture, *Caddyshack II* was another rather low-brow entertainment vehicle. In it, an ethnic real estate developer who has earned his wealth through hard work, is pitted against a group of wealthy "blue-bloods". The blue-bloods attempt to block construction on the developers' low-income housing project, claiming that a ramshackle barn and delapidated farmhouse on the property



are of historical significance. One exchange between the blue-bloods and the developer centers on the developers question, "How come when the property was just sitting here nobody wanted to do anything about it but suddenly when we begin to develop it takes on historic significance?...Lady, I think you just don't want these poor people to have a place to live."

Obviously, as in the case of *Breakin' 2*, the characters are presented more as caricatures than complex individuals but **again** the idea of "preservation" is linked to "haves" rather than "have nots". The "preservationists" of the historical society in this motion picture are portrayed as out-of-touch, unconcerned snobs who are willing to manipulate the system to get their way. Preservation as a profession must at least consider why, in both popular caricatures, its supporters are depicted as snobbish, elitist, rigid and rule-bound. Perhaps, as Treutt Latimer suggested, the "National Trust may give the impression of a Rolls Royce organization when it should be giving the impression of a Ford or Chevrolet."<sup>22</sup>

If the 1980's was a decade when popular culture took an interest in preservation issues, it also marked a period where built-environment professionals attempted to reach out to the general public. During the course of the 1980's, two

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<sup>22</sup>Treutt Latimer, "A National Perspective" in *Preservation, Toward an Ethic in the 80's*. (Washington, DC. The Preservation Press, 1979) 118-9



architectural historians took a crack at making the arcana of architecture and architectural history accessible to a wider audience through motion pictures. Within the context of these presentations, historic preservation, as a subset of architecture and urbanism, was addressed in varying degrees. In both Robert A.M. Stern's *Pride of Place* and Spiro Kostof's *America by Design*, historic preservation issues were treated in the larger context of American architecture. The decision to treat architecture typologically as opposed to either chronologically or regionally was an organizational approach used in both series. And, as in any program designed to cover a topic as wide-ranging as American architecture there was a tendency to focus most specifically on the well-known icons and many of the same buildings show up in both treatments. Intriguingly, both series were produced in 1986 and received national airings on PBS.

Kostof's series, produced and directed by Warner Schuman, was a five-part documentary which explored the history of America's built-environment. Called an "ambitious series"<sup>23</sup> the program began with a look at *The House*, that piece of architecture most familiar to Americans, and proceeded to treat *The Workplace*, *The Street*, *Public Places and Monuments* and finally *The Shape of the Land*. One reviewer called Kostof's attempt "standard PBS

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<sup>23</sup> *Architecture on Screen: A Directory of Films and Videos*. edited by Nadine Covert, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993) 14.





production...too ambitious in scope and therefore inevitably superficial"<sup>24</sup> While this assertion is undeniable, it must be countered that, for most Americans' a superficial treatment was most likely the **only** one they ever will experience (and, perhaps, **want** to experience) about a topic that impacts their lives on a daily basis. Any well-produced programming which brings the subject of the built-environment before the public can only serve to advance awareness of its concerns. Toward this end Kostof's treatment of American Architectural history was "clear ...intelligent and coherent".<sup>25</sup>

The fourth program in the series (*Public Places and Monuments*) focused most specifically on preservation concerns. One segment touched on the need to preserve the built-environment and to "regulate the remorseless course of progress".<sup>26</sup> Kostof presented a variety of cities as examples of successful preservation including Charleston and Baltimore, as well as the more ersatz-preserved cities of Greenfield Village and Williamsburg. In this sense, Kostof's--and, by extension, the viewing public's--notion of preservation was perhaps more 1966 than 1986, but he, at least, made the effort to deal with the topic.

Robert A.M. Stern's series *Pride of Place: A Personal View of Architecture* took a quite different tone than Kostof

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<sup>24</sup> Covert, (1993). 13

<sup>25</sup> Covert, (1993) 4.

<sup>26</sup> Spiro Kostof and Werner Schuman. *America By Design: Public Places and Monuments*. Guggenheim Productions and WTTW-TV. 1987



and suffered mightily by comparison. Stern's production purported to "examine American architecture in its historical and cultural context, to focus on what makes it American and discuss how the problems and solutions to those problems are distinctly American."<sup>27</sup> The intent of Stern's series was quite ambitious and undeniably noble. Certainly, increasing the general public's consciousness of architectural concerns, and pointing out the public's role as the utilizers and beneficiaries of (and occasionally the oppressed by) the built-environment, could serve to elevate the dialogue about architecture in the United States. A further argument can be made that increasing the public's **general** awareness and appreciation of the built-environment one might increase awareness of the value of **specific** historic building's and communities. But within the context of Stern's presentation these issues were actually made less clear.

Stern, who appeared as the on-camera host, was--as the title of the piece implied--delivering a personal view of architecture. His view was idiosyncratic and the motion picture served as a forum for his anti-modernist cant. While Stern's anti-modernist feelings are certainly defensible, he made no attempt to explain, for example, why modernism was important, what values modernism reflected, that some Americans found the architectural forms compelling, why

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<sup>27</sup>Robert A.M. Stern, *Pride of Place*, Malone Gill Productions, 1986.



American business embraced modernism, et cetera. Stern did not offer information, he made pronouncements. As a person whose expertise was practicing, teaching and writing about architecture Stern made an uncomfortable, awkward and stiff host. He relied on terminology which, although familiar to students and practitioners of architecture and architectural history, could only have been foreign and daunting to the uninitiated. That Stern utilized the vocabulary of his profession would not have been problematic if he had taken the time to define his terms. As supervisor of the project, however, the ultimate responsibility for insuring this happened rested with director Murray Grigor.<sup>28</sup> Grigor allowed Stern to confirm the public suspicions evidenced in the popular culture depictions of built-environment professionals discussed earlier. Stern, as a representative of the architectural profession, was arcane, obtuse, effete and frightening devoid of the nobility with which a truly learned person shares his knowledge with the less informed. The series was funded, in part, by Films for the Humanities and might have been better suited for a university class than for a general audience. Sadly, there was little humanity apparent in Stern, himself.

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<sup>28</sup> Grigor has extensive experience as a director of motion pictures about architecture. His motion picture *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (1983) was the first film to win a citation of excellence from the American Institute of Architects.



There were some positive elements to Stern's series, however, most notably the thoughtful and imaginative camera work of director of photography Terry Hopkins and cameraman Buddy Squires. Both of these men had extensive experience with architectural cinematography <sup>29</sup> and it was clear in the manner that they structured the shots. The images captured and displayed within the context of this motion picture supplied information about buildings and landscape which could not have been revealed by still photographs. Their use of aerial motion pictures allowed viewers to see the buildings and their surrounding landscapes as architects and planners might have viewed them on the drafting table: in plan. The images emphasized siting issues and revealed formal information about spaces such as axiality and the implications of symmetrical or asymmetrical layout. By employing a moving camera--and exploiting the technology of the stedi-cam, dollies on track, jib-arms and large cranes <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Terry Hopkins served as director of photography on a Murray Grigor directed documentary motion picture about the restoration of Carnegie Hall. Buddy Squires has collaborated extensively with Ken Burn's including *The Brooklyn Bridge*, *The Statue of Liberty* and *Hands to Work, Hearts to God*; a motion picture about the Shakers which featured extensive treatments of Shaker architecture and design.

<sup>30</sup> Each of these particular devices assists the motion picture camera operator in moving the camera through space fluidly. Were a camera operator to merely walk through spaces while holding the camera, the bouncing and shaking of his body as it moved would be transmitted to the motion picture image. The "shakiness" of the image would be extremely distracting to viewers. The human body visually compensates for this jarring motion so we are rarely aware of the physical shock of our own movement. For motion pictures to effectively mimic human vision we must utilize these technological aids. The stedi-cam and dolly are most effective at imitating the sense of vision that a walking human being





--the filmmakers offered the viewers an approximation of how spaces are revealed as one moves through them. In urban settings, Hopkins, under Grigor's direction, illustrated how one building can be hidden and then revealed when an observer moved past another building. Sequences such as this deftly pointed out the complexity and joy of architectural settings in a way that Stern's pedantic verbiage could not. The thoughtful cinematography offered one particular element unavailable to still photography but one which architecture exploits: surprise. According to Grigor, "architecture usually exceeds the expectations created by a [still] photograph....To comprehend architecture, one needs to move through its spaces [and]...only [motion pictures] can deliver the essential spatial dimensions of space and volume."<sup>31</sup> In this sense Stern's series functioned as a benchmark of both how and how not to approach the subject of architecture and the built-environment at the same time.

The range of the unaffiliated motion pictures was vast. And they illustrated that a large budget did not necessary guarantee an effective motion picture. What the unaffiliated motion pictures reveal, perhaps, was that if an organization had a genuine desire to make a motion picture they could get

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perceives. The jib arm and crane allow the camera operator to change levels both vertically and horizontally, thus providing views which human beings cannot typically achieve.

<sup>31</sup> Murray Grigor. "Space in Time: Filming Architecture." in *Architecture on Screen: A Directory of Films and Videos*. edited by Nadine Covert, (New York:Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993). xxix



it done. However, once the motion picture it was often difficult to distribute and even more difficult to ascertain whether or not the motion picture had any real impact on those who did see it. The Nielson rating numbers for *This Old House* indicate that there is an audience for motion picture-based preservation/built environment information. These numbers further suggest that a thoughtfully-produced program about the built environment will receive public attention providing that the program is sensitive to public--not personal or institutional--concerns.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CASE STUDY: THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND THEIR USE OF PERSUASIVE MOTION PICTURES

"If the historic preservation movement will adopt the stance of the conservationists and ecologists, they will enjoy success beyond anything encountered so far," stated Arthur Frommer, in a keynote address at the Illinois Preservation Conference in 1993.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, preservationists have long realized that the environmental movement has achieved far greater public acceptance and support than the preservation movement. Indeed, preservationists have made a concerted effort to reframe their persuasive rhetoric to position preservation as a part of the environmental movement. Yet, although preservationists recognize the environmental movement's success, both in promoting their cause and attracting supporters, preservationists have never analyzed the communication strategies which have brought environmentalists such success. Although Gerald George, in a study commissioned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, concluded that, "[a] decade of television specials and news media attention has widened public acceptance of the values of ecology,

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Frommer, Keynote Address, Illinois Preservation Conference quoted by Elizabeth Merritt, "Legal Advocacy", *Landmark Yellow Pages*. (Washington DC: The Preservation Press. 1993), 81.



wildlife preservation and natural resource conservation,"<sup>2</sup> he did not discuss how these television specials were created nor did he discuss how such media coverage was garnered. In the course of research for this thesis I did not locate one article in any preservation publication which seriously explored the motion picture strategy of the conservation movement.

In an article which explored how some environmental groups utilized the media, Joel Connelly wrote, "Mao Zedong taught his followers that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. In the world of the 1990's, however, political and societal change flow through the lens of a camera. Environmentalists learned this lesson long ago...[The] movement found that the **only** [emphasis added] way to save species and preserve wild places was to arouse the public with visual images."<sup>3</sup> Since the beginnings of the movement, environmentalists embraced the power of images to motivate and they have utilized images--both still and motion picture--to arouse public support. Historic preservation, too, has employed images since its earliest days and has, to some extent, utilized them to inflame and persuade.<sup>4</sup> But

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald George, *How Can the National Trust Best Work with Grassroots Preservationists: Consulting Report to the National Trust for Historic Preservation*, (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1990), 64.

<sup>3</sup> Joel Connelly, "A Growing Awareness, Environmental Groups and the Media." *Aperture 120* (1990), 36.

<sup>4</sup>The preservation movement has produced a number of print documents which have exploited the value of the image as a persuasive device.





the bulk of these images, such as the HABS/HAER photographs, have predominantly been used to document rather than inspire. While the environmental movement has employed images to encourage change and focus national and international attention on its cause; the preservation movement has been, for the most part, content to merely record buildings and districts about to be lost through demolition or neglect.

The conservation movement has set as a priority "educating the public"--in other words public persuasion.<sup>5</sup> The producers of "educational" motion pictures which advocate environmental conservation have clearly focused on altering

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Beginning with *Heritage So Rich*, often credited with helping to persuade Congress to pass the Preservation Act of 1966, preservationists have employed such photographic and textual documents as a means to arouse public support. Perhaps the most notable of these are the so-called "lost" books which include images of buildings which have been destroyed accompanied by text designed to arouse the reader to stop such destruction. There are at least 15 of these lost books which typically focus specifically on one city or another, for example--*Lost New York*. One of the earliest examples of this photo-documentary genre was Constance Greiff's *Lost America*. Diane Maddex suggested that these books were "pleas for an end to irrational destruction, attempts to awaken the public to the measure of loss and [to present] available mechanisms for preservation." See Diane Maddex, editor, *All About Old Buildings; The Whole Preservation Catalogue*. (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Preservation, 1989).

<sup>5</sup>The use of the term "public education" occurs frequently in preservation policy level literature. But education--the imparting of knowledge to enrich self-development of the learner--is not actually what preservationists have in mind. The goal of such preservation "educational" efforts is public persuasion--an attempt to evoke an attitudinal or behavioral change in the audience. The use of the term "education" to describe such efforts is misleading and incorrect. The goal of most organizational "educational" output, pointed out Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, is generally persuasive, bordering on and occasionally crossing into the realm of propaganda. Such propagandistic efforts need not necessarily be viewed as nefarious, however. For, although popular conceptions of the term suggest otherwise, propaganda is actually a value-neutral term which means, "to propagate or spread" particular ideas. See Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1992)



the mind-set of the public and thus affecting, when possible, attitudinal change. "The heart of any land trust's mission", wrote A. Elizabeth Watson, "includes not only saving land, but also educating the community about the importance of saving land....A well made motion picture, through the simple addition of motion, conveys more information and appeals more effectively to the emotions of the viewer than any other format."<sup>6</sup> Conservationists like Watson have paid careful attention to the practical aspects of making persuasive motion pictures, learning what works and what doesn't. While Watson pointed out that "the best use of film and video is to motivate the audience," she cautioned that "a potential pitfall...is to pack [the motion picture] with too much hard information."<sup>7</sup> (As we have seen, this is precisely, where National Trust-produced documentaries have gone wrong.) Watson contended that because "providing information" is what advocacy groups do best, there is a tendency to default to this comfort zone. "If at the end of viewing [the motion picture] the audience wants to support your cause and learn more, [the production agency] will have struck the right balance between motivation and information."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A. Elizabeth Watson, "Visual Vitality: A Primer on Audiovisual Productions for Land Trusts. in *Exchange: The Journal of the Land Trust Alliance*. Volume 10 No.3, Summer 1991. 12

<sup>7</sup> Watson, (1991). 13

<sup>8</sup> Watson, (1991). 14



Greenpeace is a significant environmental group which has "chosen the camera lens as its weapon." As Alan Reichman of Greenpeace stated, "In that way we mobilize public concern and pressure. We're not talking abstractions and descriptions."<sup>9</sup> In addition, Greenpeace has successfully utilized images to "visually lobby" Congress; and the groups exposure of driftnet fishing in the North Pacific resulted in the Bush Administration's reluctant support of a worldwide ban on driftnet fishing.

Even environmental groups considered to be more mainstream than the radical Greenpeace have learned from and employed some of its media tactics. One such group, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), had followed an approach similar to preservationists. The NRDC, like preservation groups such as Preservation Action, did not typically employ motion picture imagery as a persuasive device, and instead, fought its battles in the courts and the lobby of Congress. In 1989, however, NRDC contacted CBS's *60 Minutes*, an issues-oriented news-magazine television program, and informed them that some food industries were utilizing potentially carcinogenic pesticides (notably alar) to enhance the appearance of food. *60 Minutes* ran a story about the situation. So informed, the general public began to register

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<sup>9</sup> Connelly, (1990), 41.



its complaints to public officials and within a few months alar was removed from the marketplace.<sup>10</sup>

Since aggressive media tactics, coupled with the employment of motion pictures, seem to yield direct and positive results, why do preservation organizations like the National Trust, for example, fail to adopt such methods to advance their concerns? Environmentalist Joel Connelly offered some insight into the situation when he noted, "as a writer I hate to admit it, but the camera's lens can be more powerful than the writer's pen."<sup>11</sup> Connelly's statement reflects the sort of underlying resistance which writers and scholars sometimes exhibit when it comes to utilizing motion pictures as a communicative device. And if print bias exists in such a visually savvy movement as environmentalism, it should not surprise us that it exists to an even greater degree in the more scholarly and antiquarian (historic) preservation movement. "Of the scholars, nothing is to be expected, I am afraid," wrote Sir Arthur Elton, a pioneer of the documentary film, pleading in a much quoted article for greater recognition of the value of motion pictures as a source material for history.<sup>12</sup>

Derek Bousé, in an unpublished dissertation, examined the persuasive use of visual images of nature in

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<sup>10</sup> Connelly, (1990), 43.

<sup>11</sup> Connelly, (1990), 43.

<sup>12</sup> Smith Paul, "Introduction" in *The Historian and the Film*, edited by Paul Smith. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1.





environmental media campaigns.<sup>13</sup> (Bousé restricted his analysis to images which appeared in motion pictures only.) His study addressed the manner in which the natural environment was portrayed, perceived and understood as a visual entity and he considered the use of image-based, motion picture media to influence attitudes, behavior and environmental policy. Bousé argued that the notions of "wilderness" which people hold and respond to and which are critical to the persuasive aspects of these films are dependent on visual imagery rather than on a personal knowledge of a particular place. Or as Robert Adam pointed out, "more people currently know the appearance of Yosemite...from looking at photographic books than from looking at the place themselves."<sup>14</sup> (Adams' statement is relevant to preservationists, as well, since much of our information about the built environment comes from captured and motion picture images.)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Derek Bousé, *The Wilderness Documentary: Film, Video and the Visual Rhetoric of American Environmentalism*. An Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania. 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Adam, "Inhibited Nature" in *Aperture 81*, (1978) 29

<sup>15</sup> This case has been made by both Bruno Zevi and Barry Bergdoll in their respective analyses of the use of motion pictures and captured images by built environment professionals. Zevi points out that motion pictures and captured images help overcome "the physical impossibility of transporting buildings ... to a given place in order to exhibit them." Barry Bergdoll further suggested that many students of architecture and architectural history learn about canonical American and international architecture--which they will never actually visit--taught by professors whose visual understanding of some of these same buildings is based on exposure to the same captured images of these iconographic structures themselves. See Bruno Zevi, *Architecture of Space: How to look at Architecture* Translated by Milton Gendel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957)



Like the "unaffiliated" motion pictures produced by the preservation movement,<sup>16</sup> many of the motion pictures Bousé reviewed were made as "battle films," designed to help save one specific wilderness area or to pass specific pieces of proposed legislation.<sup>17</sup> Narrowly-focused motion pictures such as these, while important aspects of persuasive rhetoric, were not the norm, however. Rather, Bousé asserted, the majority of environmental motion pictures addressed wilderness issues in broader, more general terms and could be viewed as part of an ongoing, long-term public education effort.<sup>18</sup>

This is a critical aspect of the environmental movement's communication strategy and it indicates a point where the two movements diverge. Although the majority of environmental motion pictures supported the larger notion of environmental education, the majority of preservation-produced motion pictures addressed preservation as a broader topic only tangentially. Typically, and especially in the

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or Barry Bergdoll, "Altered States of Vision: Film, Video and the Teaching of Architectural History" in *Architecture on Screen*, edited by Nadine Covert (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Of the 77 motion pictures of historic preservation oriented motion pictures included in the appendix, 28 (or 37 per cent) focus on the preservation of one particular building. Of these approximately half are direct appeals for the "saving" of the particular building featured. These are preservations answer to environmentalism's "battle films".

<sup>17</sup> Bousé, (1991). 4

<sup>18</sup> Only approximately 21 percent of the preservation motion pictures identified for this thesis (16 of 77) fall into this category of broader, more "educational" motion pictures. Included in this category are the motion pictures produced by and for the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



case of the unaffiliated motion pictures, preservation motion pictures were single-building oriented (37 percent) or area and object specific--devoted to the preservation issues of a particular community or building type (38 percent).

Most of the films which Derek Bousé reviewed for his study were made "not just to increase awareness but to influence attitudes, and to affect the political decision-making process that determines what will be saved and what will be lost."<sup>19</sup> An ever increasing utilization of motion picture media by the environmental movement, he asserted, gave environmentalism the character of a vast publicity campaign driven by a "virtual mass communications industry."<sup>20</sup> Groups such as the Sierra Club, the Izaak Walton League and Ducks Unlimited were--at the time of Bousé's study--actively involved in the production of motion pictures. Of the 25 large environmental groups loosely referred to as the majors, the Audubon Society, the Center for Marine Conservation, the Cousteau Society, Greenpeace, The National Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund have all been

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<sup>19</sup> Bousé (1991) 10.

<sup>20</sup> Bousé (1991) 10. Bousé's assertion that these "educational" motion pictures produced by the environmental movement are in part designed to influence attitudes is supported by the work of Garth Jowett and Victoria O' Donnell. Jowett and O' Donnell argue that propaganda is not necessarily a bad thing and emphasize that one must accept this as a valid form of fomenting an organizations rhetorical position. For detail see Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O' Donnell *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1986.) especially Chapter One, "What is Propaganda".



involved in some form of motion picture production in recent years, in addition to their use of other forms of media.<sup>21</sup>

Although many of the major environmental groups have produced motion pictures, few of them have done so "in house". Large environmental organizations have typically relied on private vendors to provide the production services and expertise. In today's film and video market, Bousé determined, "[motion pictures] are made for environmental organizations (presumably to reflect their values)...[the organizations themselves] act as contractor, producer and distributor with their name and logo appearing to signify [their] involvement."<sup>22</sup> This assessment might be further extended to point out that it is the producing organization's intention to ensure that any associative value of the motion picture's content is inextricably linked to the organization responsible for presenting them.

The media strategy of The Nature Conservancy is a case in point. The Nature Conservancy -- in addition to its internally-generated persuasive information -- provided financial contributions which assisted in underwriting the PBS-produced series *Nature*. The Nature Conservancy maintained this relationship for three years (1986-89) but eventually ceased funding *Nature* because they believed the program did

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<sup>21</sup>Bousé(1991) 12

<sup>22</sup>Bousé (1991) 13





not adequately express the Conservancy's policies and goals.<sup>23</sup> The Nature Conservancy did, however, acknowledge that involvement with the television series increased their name recognition.<sup>24</sup>

This situation underscores several issues germane to developing a media strategy which preservationists need to consider. Could The Nature Conservancy have gained name recognition as effectively by other means for a similar cost? (If not?) Could they have explored different programming alternatives--perhaps, for example, assuming the role of program producer--to assure that such a program would surely reflect their goals and beliefs? As the Nature Conservancy discovered in its role of corporate underwriter, once the money has been given virtually all control of the production--at least during that funding cycle--has been lost. The power which funders have is specifically related to their threatened withdrawal of support and this power is directly related to how easily the producers can raise other funding. Nonetheless, as Bousé pointed out, "those organizations [who possessed]

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<sup>23</sup>In a telephone interview, April 22, 1994, Derek Bousé reported that after a two year hiatus from providing underwriting support The Nature Conservancy re-established their funding for the PBS series. It was Bousé's assessment that The Nature Conservancy determined that the benefits of the public exposure which *Nature* provided outweighed any the deleterious effect that differences in philosophy might raise. This is an especially critical consideration for the preservation movement which has an appropriate outlet for such underwriting exposure in the PBS series *This Old House*. Although this program might not represent the precise sensibilities of the preservation movement, it does share some similar concerns and offers the potential of 5-8 million interested viewers a week.

<sup>24</sup>Bousé, (1991) 13



contracts to have their films exhibited on national television have placed...[environmental] issues squarely in the public's prime time eye and gained some name recognition for themselves in the bargain." <sup>25</sup>

But the environmental movement--like the preservation movement--learned that information as reported by the news media tended to be both ephemeral and sensationalistic. Sharon Friedman, writing in the *Gannett Journal*, pointed out that environmental issues are often technologically complex, directly tied to political and social concerns and fraught with a good deal of scientific uncertainty. Consequently, while environmental issues were covered by the media it was rare that they received more than a cursory treatment. Although this media coverage kept the issue before the public, Friedman suggested that the coverage was rarely thoughtful enough to convince the public that the issue was worthy of their concern. It was the event, Friedman pointed out, rather than the message which took precedent.<sup>26</sup> Historian Daniel Boorstin coined the term pseudo-events to describe just such media treatment. It was Boorstin's contention that pseudo-events were a designed precisely to be reported by the news media.<sup>27</sup> This sort of pseudo-event was

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<sup>25</sup> Bousé (1991) 13

<sup>26</sup> Sharon Friedman "Two Decades of the Environmental Beat" in *The Gannett Center Journal*, Volume 4 Number 3, Summer 1990. 13-24.

<sup>27</sup> See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. (Chicago: Harper and Row, 1961)



utilized by the preservation movement early in its history-- and to some extent still is--and often resulted in images of preservationists lying before bulldozers in order to "save" buildings. Some members of the field suggested images such as these led to characterizations of the preservationist as a "fuzzy headed obstructionist."<sup>28</sup>

Images shaped by the news media, contended Friedman, often reveal a penchant for the dramatic. The notion that such "free" media coverage actually contributes to the general public's understanding of an issue is one which deserves careful scrutiny. It is possible that this sort of haphazard and cursory coverage is actually detrimental and preservation groups should focus instead on conveying a more controlled message. One means of controlling the message is for advocacy groups to take the initiative in bringing issue to the attention of the news media. As Charles Salmon points out "[a particular] social condition get to be recognized [by the general public] as such, largely because...it has been pushed or pulled to the media's attention by an advocacy group."<sup>29</sup> Salmon's observation is distinctly significant to preservationists. If preservationists depend on "the fourth estate" to publicize their concerns because preservation is noble, just, historically significant or economically

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<sup>28</sup> *Preservation, Toward an Ethic in the 1980's*, National Trust for Preservation (1979), 62.

<sup>29</sup> Charles T. Salmon, "God Understands When the Cause is Noble". *Gannett Center Journal* Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 1990. 24



sensible, they will have a long wait, and the movement will, meanwhile, suffer from continued public disregard.

In fact, Bousé argued, "the public's concern over specific environmental matters may only be a reflection of the concerns of those environmental organizations with the resources to underwrite large-scale media campaigns - including PSA's and video footage provided directly to news organizations."<sup>30</sup> This method of distributing motion picture press releases is one method by which publicists can assist in gaining media access for their organizations. Some might conclude that such direct distribution by an organization borders on the propagandistic and smacks of manipulation; that the media can be manipulated in just such a manner has been noted by Charles Salmon.<sup>31</sup> But this technique of providing motion picture footage and stories to news organizations has long been a public relations tactic, which has been--and still is--put to effective use by industrialists, as well. Preservationists recently witnessed just such a campaign during the recent controversy over real estate development in Manassas, VA with both sides attempting to spin the story using similar public relations techniques. An understanding of the workings of the news media allows an organization with a message, combined with supplied images,

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<sup>30</sup> Bousé. (1991) 52

<sup>31</sup> See Charles T. Salmon, "God Understands When the Cause is Noble". *Gannett Center Journal* Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 1990.





to secure media assistance in audience persuasion, even, when the information used to generate the persuasion has little or no basis in fact. The following example of persuasive media strategy illustrates this point.

In an effort to "green" its image a large chemical company produced a motion picture which suggested that recycled plastic bottles and automobile parts were being turned into sails for a "tall ship". The facts that this recycling process was barely operable, cost prohibitive, and undertaken as a "one time only" project, specifically to help produce the recycled sails was not mentioned by the company. The images made available to the media showed plastic bottles and automobile bumpers as they were recycled, sailcloth being woven at a 19th-century New-England textile mill, sails being hand-cut and assembled at North Sails (sail-makers for the America's Cup Yachts) and finally sails being raised on an elegant three-masted schooner. What more persuasive images could have been included in this paean to "green" corporate consciousness.

The corporate project-manager provided this "pre-selected" raw footage of the "recycling" process--including powerful footage of the schooner under full sail at sea--to representatives of the news media at a press conference held to unveil the scheme. He made certain that the fully rigged tall ship--complete with "recycled" sails--would provide the appropriate visual background for the corporate speaker at



the press conference. No one in the media objected that the images provided for their reports had been shot by a company-hired videographer and approved by a company publicist. Thus, the resultant news reports--dominated by the spectacular footage of the tall ship, it's recycled plastic sails stretched taut in the breeze on an azure blue sea--suggested that this sort of recycling was a typical process and reflected the company's on-going environmental concerns. Not a bad media image for the largest industrial polluter in its state. For a minor investment the company received a great deal of free publicity, improved its environmental image and appeared to be supportive of sailing's heritage to boot.<sup>32</sup>

The preceding story illustrates one aspect of the television news media's culture which makes it particularly vulnerable to this sort of manipulation: the sheer volume of news stories required to fill time each broadcast day.<sup>33</sup> Few broadcast news editors can turn down a story as visually attractive and emotionally appealing as the one about the "recycled" sails. Consequently, savvy media managers often

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<sup>32</sup>I was employed as a director/cameraman for this project and all of my information was gained during the course of the work. This project is precisely what Boorstin had in mind when he coined the term "pseudo-event". The very act of calling a press conference creates a legitimacy for the information to be revealed. Press and media coverage provide a perhaps unintended, but nonetheless real, sense of gravitas to proceedings which are purely "smoke and mirrors".

<sup>33</sup>This is particularly true of local news telecasts. In many local television markets, especially in larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia, television news is scheduled in multiple blocks often accounting for three or more hours of a broadcast day. It is local news broadcasts in markets such as these that are most vulnerable to this sort of manipulative public relations.



devise and utilize such projects. The news editor can fill two minutes of program time with compelling footage at no cost in manpower or money. The tradeoff, of course, is that the public has been misled and both the media and the organization are complicit in the deception. But as Charles Salmon noted, "estimates of the amount of news that reporters and editors get from public relations and public information sources will inevitably be understated".<sup>34</sup>

Robert Dilenschneider, a public relations professional, asserted that "[an organization] should never pay to place a story."<sup>35</sup> According to Dilenschneider, such propagandistic manipulations are realistic and necessary and should be considered "the cost of freight" for doing business in a multi-cultural, multi-interest, democratic country. An organization with an agenda to advance need not concern itself with journalistic objectivity; that is, ostensibly, the purview of the media. It is the organization's responsibility to present its message in as effective and flattering light as it can muster. "Organizations [who do so] should not be regarded as inherently unethical, deceitful or self serving," wrote Charles Salmon,..."the competitive process of problem definition should be considered inevitable

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<sup>34</sup> See Charles T. Salmon, "God Understands When the Cause is Noble". *Gannett Center Journal* Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 1990. 24

<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Dilenschneider, *Power and Influence: Mastering the Art of Persuasion*, (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1992). 54



in a pluralistic society."<sup>36</sup> Such rhetorical posturing falls into what Robert Bernays, considered to be the father of American public relations, called "benevolent manipulation." For as Salmon concluded, "given the subjective ways in which issues are defined, the success of an advocacy group in gaining widespread recognition of a social problem is a direct function of it's skill in manipulating the news."<sup>37</sup>

In fact, the traditional media's unwillingness or inability to "spread the environmentalists message" led environmentalists to seek out or develop "alternative media coverage and production, as well as alternative distribution and exhibition channels."<sup>38</sup> Documentary motion pictures, especially those which posited alternatives to mainstream behavior, have traditionally depended on alternative forms of distribution. As we have seen, during the late 1970's the National Trust for Historic Preservation itself operated just such an alternative distribution network for documentaries devoted to the cause of preservation. Although the program was discontinued in 1980 (eliminated, it would seem, because it was deemed fiscally unsound), it bears consideration that such informational distribution strategies are actually quite effective ways of reaching new members and potential supporters of a cause.

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<sup>36</sup> Salmon, (1990), 29.

<sup>37</sup> Salmon, (1990), 28.

<sup>38</sup> Bousé (1991), 15.





In fact, Daniel Leab suggested that the use of motion picture documentaries as a weapon--a means of pleading a case--has been aided immeasurably by dramatic changes in distribution, as well as in technology and funding. Yet, he also recognized that problems associated with securing funding for a motion picture project and with organizing effective distribution of that product have hardly been eliminated. "It still remains difficult", he wrote, "for an independent production to reach its intended audience."<sup>39</sup> Typically, such motion pictures are promoted in membership newsletters and by word of mouth. Motion pictures produced by various groups within the environmental movement are often "sent out with the suggestion that they be shown to as many classes, clubs and civic organizations as possible."<sup>40</sup>

The increased flow of environmental information, Derek Bousé concluded, has made it easier for environmental organizations to promote their own social and political agenda, to increase their memberships and financial resources, and to influence congressional legislation. The number of motion picture documentaries directly addressing environmental issues has, according to Bousé expanded geometrically in a few short years. Most of the motion

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Leab, "The Moving Image as Interpreter of History--Telling the Dancer From the Dance". in *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television*. edited by John O'Connor (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing, 1990), 74.

<sup>40</sup> Bousé. (1991), 15.



pictures utilized by the environmental movement were produced by motion picture professionals. Some of these were sold directly to cable and broadcast television outlets (PBS, for example) but Bousé determined, a small but steady number of programs were produced by environmental organizations themselves.

The programs produced by members of organizations whose primary concern is helping to protect and preserve the natural environment tended to be distributed by alternative means such as direct mailing or, in some cases, passed directly from member to member. This increase in environmental related activity--especially media activity--Bousé contended, was one reason that the loosely affiliated groups who share a concern for the natural environment have been described as a movement.<sup>41</sup>

And as a movement environmentalists have, as Joel Connelly pointed out, actively captured images which supported their cause and aggressively sought to publicize their concerns. Building on Marshall McLuhan's earlier dictum, Connelly suggested that "cameras connect the global village."<sup>42</sup> The environmental movement has made it a priority to assure that members of the "village" recognize environmental concerns no matter how distant the problem, and it has utilized these images to garner public support for its

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<sup>41</sup> Bousé (1991), 367.

<sup>42</sup> Connelly (1990), 40.



positions. And the images which they have exploited most powerfully have been motion pictures.

Unlike preservationists, who have typically shied away from the exploitation of images of built-environment destruction as a means of public persuasion, the environmental movement has capitalized on environmental disasters through the use of motion pictures. For example, prior to the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, the oil lobby was successfully persuading Congress--aided by a well-financed advertising campaign--to reduce American dependence on foreign oil. Environmentalists, who had employed images of pristine wilderness in an attempt to persuade congress and the public to stop oil drilling in the Artic National Wildlife Refuge, were unsuccessful in their attempts. But when environmentalists aggressively utilized motion pictures of the devastation of Prince William Sound, confronting the public and their congressional representatives with images of oil-fouled beaches and ravaged creatures, they set back any consideration of oil drilling in the wilderness for several years.

Clearly, there are few built-environment images which carry the emotional impact of an oil-befouled baby seal, but there are compelling images available nonetheless. Indeed, as discussed previously, one of the most powerful pro-preservation/anti-demolition motion pictures produced by the preservation movement, *The Fall of An American Architecture*,



featured handsome buildings collapsing under the weight of a wrecking ball while a bell tolled. Clearly, then, early in the history of the movement preservationists seemed willing to exploit the persuasive motion picture as a rallying cry. But, as preservationists attempted to establish themselves in a more mainstream position, however, they curtailed their use of emotionally tinged rhetoric and supplanted it with bottom-line arguments hinging on the fiscal sanity of preservation. While economic forces cannot be ignored, and fiscal benefits do provide one valid argument in favor of preservation, preservationists must not lose sight of the fact that no one ever put his body in front of a tank because it made fiscal sense. Statistics indicate that the American public does not believe that historic preservation is on a par with environmental concerns<sup>43</sup>. This is true, in part, because preservation rhetoric altered its appeal from feelings to finance. Motion pictures still offer one way for the historic preservation movement to reassert the power of feelings and persuade American's that preservation is important. Certainly, the utilization of motion pictures to inform and

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<sup>43</sup> Studies which were conducted for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and summarized in the Gerald George report *How Can the National Trust Best Work with Historic Preservationists: Consulting Report to the National Trust for Historic Preservation*. (Washington, D.C., National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1990) indicate that public awareness of preservation concerns needed to be increased. Interested readers should attempt to see a study conducted for the National Trust in 1988 by Hart Research Associates. Although I made numerous appeals to the National Trust I was never allowed to see the original study results. My conclusions are based on Gerald George's summary of the Hart Associates findings.





persuade has been--and continues to be--an effective staple of the environmental movement's media strategy and it bears further scrutiny if preservationists hope to achieve comparable success.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As preservationists sought to garner public support for their cause they altered their rhetorical approach from early appeals to emotive and historical associations, to a mixed-bag of rationales ranging from "improvement of quality of life" to economic concerns. But the attempt to position historic preservation as an environmental concern, despite over 20 years of persuasive rhetoric, has never completely taken hold. The general public still does not see preservation as a quality of life or environmental concern. Moreover the rhetorical shift required to make this linkage has left the public uncertain as to who preservationists are and what they hope to accomplish. Although this rhetorical shift was driven partly by a gradual redefining of the scope of preservation concerns, it was also fueled by a desire to increase the membership of the preservation movement to keep pace with environmentalism. Yet, it would appear that preservationists never studied the aggressive persuasive techniques of the environmentalists, even though some preservationists suggested that the movement do so. Or, indeed, if they had studied such techniques preservationists lacked the fortitude and resolve to employ them.

As we have seen, motion pictures as persuasive devices have been critical to the successful communication strategy of environmentalism since the mid-1960's. Environmentalists



have aggressively courted motion picture media outlets, produced documentaries and PSA's, sponsored television series and sought to position environmentalism as a global concern. And they have accomplished this without one central voice to speak for their for their cause.

On the other hand, the preservation movement's use of persuasive motion pictures is a history of fits and starts. The persuasive and educational motion pictures of the National Trust dribbled out at the rate of roughly one per decade. The independently produced motion pictures of the preservation movement often suffered distribution difficulties and, hence, rarely reached the necessary audiences. The failure to articulate and employ a coherent motion picture-based communications strategy has resulted in a lack of public awareness about preservation, its goals, and the critical necessity of these goals.

The National Trust is the only nationwide centralizing force in preservation. The Trust has not successfully carried out its mission to proselytize for preservation. This is evidenced by the membership levels within the Trust. Although, it important to note that other groups who **should** proselytize for the American built environment (i.e., the AIA, SAH, APT, historians, material culture specialists and archeologists) have been no more interested or successful than the National Trust. The National Trust has failed to carry out its promotional mission for a variety of reasons



including print bias, techno-phobia, institutional racism and elitism. The National Trust has historically and continuously focused on print media as means to carry forth the preservation message despite the fact that most American's chose motion pictures delivered by electronic means as their primary sources of information.<sup>1</sup>

And now we are poised on the cusp of the next millennium, one step into a paradigmatic shift in communication modalities. Communication media as we have historically understood them are changing at a geometric rate. Digital technology is rendering the traditional separations between text, motion pictures and computers meaningless. Interactivity of text, motion pictures and computers is already becoming the common mode of informational exchange. The technology exists to allow each computer to function as a media center, to seek out, for example, motion picture footage of the White House in 1920

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<sup>1</sup>According to W. Russell Neuman, television is the dominant medium, in terms of time use, representing about 50 per cent of media exposure per day per citizen. Based on the demographic data of A.C. Nielson Neuman determined that the average adult watches about 4.5 hours of television daily and listen to approximately two hours of radio. Depending on the research methodology utilized, the print media (defined as newspapers and magazines) account for between 24 and 79 minutes of attention by the average adult daily. Simply stated adults prefer motion picture communications--as delivered by television--over print by a factor of 4 to 1 at most the generous (to print), and 10 to 1 at the least. Such figures do not offer conclusive proof that motion pictures are better communicators, nor do they assert that adults are more likely to be persuaded by motion picture versus print information. What they do suggest, however, is that an adult is 4-10 times as likely to be exposed to a particular message transmitted via electronic motion pictures than in a print format. See W. Russell Neuman, *The Future of the Mass Audience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).





and to compare with footage shot in 1940. Currently, these technologies see their most successful applications at the professional level, are expensive and require massive amounts of computer memory to operate. But technology changes rapidly. If historic preservation does not finally embrace motion picture technologies and begin to exploit the growing electronic means with which to promote its cause, it will become, I fear, a weird historical blip, a footnote to history rather than the powerful advocate for managed change which it hopes to be.

I would like to propose, therefore, some suggestions to facilitate this process and make some recommendations of areas where I believe further study is in order.

**ON THE NATURE OF AFFORDABILITY:  
THE NEED FOR A MOTION PICTURE ARCHIVE**

A. Elizabeth Watson noted that the primary factor which limited the use of motion pictures by "grassroot" conservationists was their expense "in relation to the small budgets of most non-profit organizations."<sup>2</sup> This type of bottom line reality carries over into historic preservation

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<sup>2</sup>A. Elizabeth Watson, "Visual Vitality: A Primer on Audiovisual Productions for Land Trusts. in *Exchange: The Journal of the Land Trust Alliance*. Volume 10 No.3, Summer 1991. 13



as well. Studies point out that much of the work which is done, either for advocacy and or education, in the preservation field occurs at a "grassroots" level. These small agencies, which often depend on contributions and grants-writing to support their existing staffs, are unlikely to take on an expensive motion picture advocacy project.<sup>3</sup> Such a persuasive motion picture could realistically cost \$2500-\$10,000 for each minute of finished product, or more. However, the question which historic preservationists must ask themselves is not "can we afford to"?, but "can we afford not to?"

If motion pictures offer an advocacy and "educational" potential which rivals or exceeds print media, then historic preservation must find a way to make such projects affordable. One option which should be studied further is the creation of a motion picture consortium. If each of the professions which form much of the core of the historic preservation field were to pool resources for the common good it would be possible to produce more affordable productions. Motion pictures are, indeed, a recyclable resource. Footage of the Wainwright Building shot for a history of St. Louis, for example, could be re-used for a documentary on the work

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<sup>3</sup>A 1988 survey undertaken by the National Trust revealed that 65 percent of all historic house museums had no full-time staff, while 19 percent had only one paid staff person and operated on annual budgets of less than 50,000 dollars. See Travis C. McDonald, Jr. "Restoration, Re-Restoration and Real History: Trends and Issues in Historic House Museums." *Historic Preservation Forum*, November /December 1993. 22



of Louis Sullivan, a project on the history of the development sky scraper and so-on. A resource center could help those who are undertaking such a project to access existing footage. Additionally, this resource center could co-ordinate with existing motion picture archives, such as the Library of Congress, for example, to catalogue and identify footage which would provide motion picture information about historic built-environments. If professionals who are concerned with preservation can learn to do what industry has done and avoid duplication of services, it would be possible to make the existing motion picture dollar stretch quite a bit farther. Rather than paying to shoot yet another image of a building or place, that money could be spent to write and edit an otherwise unaffordable motion picture.

#### **AN IDEA REVISITED:**

#### **THE MOTION PICTURE CIRCULATING LIBRARY**

During the 1970's the National Trust operated a motion picture lending library which made available a variety of independently-produced motion pictures to groups and individuals. The library, which was discontinued in 1979, also included the motion pictures produced by the National



Trust, itself.<sup>4</sup> Although no records in the National Trust Archive suggest that the Trust tracked the effectiveness of this program, one can only conclude that it was either ineffective, cost-prohibitive or both. But if the decision to cancel this program was due to cost, such a program is worthy of reconsideration.

Most of the National Trust's collection was photographed, edited and distributed on motion picture film. The 16mm prints were expensive to purchase, ship, store and insure. The means of distribution in any new circulating motion picture library should be less-expensive videotape (and eventually laser-disc) rather than bulky motion picture film. Particularly since, given the VCR revolution of the 1980's, it is inconceivable that such a program could not be reinstated for a fraction of its former cost. Clearly, the most expensive aspect of motion picture technology involves the gathering and assemblage of material, reproduction of existing material to videotape involves a relatively minimal cost.

This means of distributing promotional material by videotape is now a relatively common one. The Brick Institute of America, for example, has produced a number of videotapes which are available to any interested party. Their videos

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<sup>4</sup>The remains of this motion picture collection are currently housed in the Slide Library of the Architecture Department at the University of Maryland, in College Park. The University of Maryland is also the home of the National Trust Archives.





focus primarily on the marketing of brick as a building material. One such production documented the aesthetic transformation of a small town in Minnesota as they replaced existing concrete sidewalks with brick. The videos provide potential end-users information that they might not take notice of were it distributed in a hectoring pamphlet.

Another organization which provides videotapes to interested parties is a preservationist group, S.O.S.(Save Outdoor Sculpture). S.O.S.'s video provides information about conditions and behaviors--such as vandalism, acid rain, pollution and poor maintenance--which threaten outdoor sculptures. The videotape offers a plea to preserve sculpture and provides the viewer with the information needed to begin a walking tour survey of their own community as well as information on assessing threatened works. This application is yet another example of how a circulating videotape library could be put to use. Videotape duplication costs are relatively inexpensive (roughly two to five dollars, depending on time-length, per duplicated tape). A preservation motion picture archive--or some other responsible preservation organization--could purchase 200 - 250 videotapes for the cost of one 16mm print.



## PROGRAMMING FOR FUNDING: THE TEACHABLE MOMENT

Since the 1980's, professionals responsible for restoration projects have begun to expose the public to the restoration process. By allowing the public to observe it, the theory goes, the process of restoration becomes a "teachable moment" in a tangible way. The people who experience something of the restoration process, especially with educational support, learn why such projects are valuable and necessary. Each visitor becomes sensitized to the need of such maintenance and/or restoration projects and hopefully motivated to contribute to them.

The popularity of television productions such as *This Old House*, *Hometime* and special presentations, such as a *Nova* episode about the restoration of the Sistine Chapel, suggests that the public is interested in the work of restorers and conservators. If sites documented their restoration processes, they could utilize these motion pictures to assist in fundraising efforts, document particularly complex restorative techniques, create interpretive documentaries, as well as provide general information about architecture and historic preservation. The tools of restoration, such as measured-drawing documentation, dendrochronology, archival research and the like, could be incorporated as raw material into such interpretive and persuasive motion pictures. Travis



McDonald has thoughtfully suggested that the processes of restoration and conservation have become as interesting to the public as the product. A holistic sensibility toward the production of such motion pictures, in co-ordination with a motion picture archive and a circulating library could assure a cost effective means of production. A motion picture of the "last" stone conservation and the intricacies involved, presented in an informative and entertaining manner, could well be the persuasive tool needed to help secure funding for the "next" stone conservation project.

#### COMMUNICATIONS IN AN ELECTRONIC AGE

"The quintessential characteristic of the new electronic media is that they all connect with one another. We are in the midst of an evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video and electronic text communications that will blur the distinctions between interpersonal and mass communications and between public and private communications."<sup>5</sup> This communications revolution will not render obsolete existing media information such as text, photographs, audio recordings and motion-picture film. Existing recorded information will be, as has been done in

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<sup>5</sup> W. Russell Neuman, *The Future of the Mass Audience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12.



the past, transferred to the current state-of-the-art recording technology. Since the new visual recording media will rely more exclusively on digital technology we will see--as we have recently seen with the audio compact disk--a reissue and re-utilization of motion-picture information. Material which had once been locked in vaults, too fragile or damaged to use, will be digitally restored and available for reinterpretation and reuse. These new recording technologies will not be subject to the same sort of degradation of images typical of the analog media such as early videotape, for example.

These digital technologies will allow moving images to be transferred through telephone lines and then sequenced and manipulated in personal computers. Digital motion picture and computer communications technologies present incredible potential for the a built-environment motion picture archive proposed above. It would be possible, for example for a preservation professional, a professor or a student, to visit the "archive" via the internet, search for motion picture and still images of a particular topic--Rockefeller Center, for example--select and download the images which could then be sequenced, if desired, in their own computer. While existing technology does not yet allow for such manipulation to be easily done, it will certainly be perfected by the time available motion picture information could be collected and catalogued. Further research toward the creation of such an





archive is in order. Only by envisioning and exploring how these technologies can be employed to serve built environment professional will the professions be positioned to take advantage of them when they are finally in place.

#### HOW THE PROS DO IT:

##### Getting the Message Through and Positioning the Product

Another aspect which must be factored into a preservation communication strategy is the sheer volume of information with which preservation messages must compete. It is estimated that the average individual is bombarded with approximately 1600 advertisements daily<sup>6</sup> and responds--not necessarily positively--to only 12. It should come as no surprise that only a small proportion of this communication flow is remembered.<sup>7</sup> Given this daunting situation, preservationists must make their messages count. When crafting advertising whose purpose is to influence public opinion, David Ogilvy suggests that it follow certain

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<sup>6</sup> Neuman (1992), 12. This figure represents all media exposure in the course of a day. While this figure seem astronomically high the reader is reminded that this figure refers to a potential number. That includes all the advertisement in the daily newspaper, any magazine advertisement plus those advertisement to which a person is exposed via broadcast and cable modalities. Television alone devotes 6 minutes per half hour program to advertising. Based on the average viewing time for an adult their exposure accounts for a minimum of 108 commercial advertisements.

<sup>7</sup> W. Russell Neuman, *The Future of the Mass Audience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 91.



principles and preservationists would do well to heed such advice. If the issue is complicated, simplify it as much as possible. Present the case in terms of the receiver's--not the sender's--self interest. Disarm with candor. Present both sides of the issue and know who your target is. "In most cases", wrote Ogilvy, "your only hope of making a dent on public opinion is to advertise to the public at large - and to use television. Television is **the** battleground on which public opinion is formed."<sup>8</sup>

Ogilvy also suggested that when a company--or organization--creates an advertising campaign, they must decide what "image" it wants for its brand. Every advertisement should make a contribution toward defining this brand image, an image helps the company decide how it will "position" the product. This should be done in a way that appeals to the potential consumers self interest. Consider the following direct mail advertisement distributed for the National Trust.

The advertising copy--an inducement to join the National Trust--arrives inside a small envelope, the sort that might contain an invitation to a ball or formal affair. Enclosed is a small white card (the invitation) and a four-page note which comprises the advertiser's pitch. The card informs the reader that he or she has been "elected to membership in the

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<sup>8</sup>Ogilvy (1985) 126.



National Trust" and "respectfully requests that [the reader] indicate his **disposition** (accept or decline only)." If the reader accepts "full vested membership" he will receive "exclusive privileges and benefits".

Such an "invitation" is clearly designed to persuade the reader that he or she is being awarded something, not merely being dunned for money. One can hardly overlook the snobbish appeal of the "invitation", however, and the implicit understanding that the "privilege" which the National Trust confers with inclusion in the club is predicated upon someone else's exclusion. What, after all, is so special about membership in a club open to everyone? The letter which accompanies the invitation further assures the reader that membership will include him in "a unique group." And it asserts that, "although the National Trust sounds rather stuffy, it really "isn't like that at all...despite its considerable weight and prestige."<sup>9</sup>

This was considered an attempt at outreach. Even the advertising copywriter must have realized how pompous the whole pitch sounded since he felt compelled to assure the reader that the National Trust was not as "stuffy" as the ad would lead you to believe. Yet that must have been **precisely** what the ad wanted you to believe or it would have

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<sup>9</sup>Advertisement of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, (ANF CRD 10.) April 24, 1995. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington DC, 1995.



structured in some other way. The Trust's advertisement could have featured images of "endangered" crumbling buildings and begged the reader not to let them be destroyed. It could have suggested that America's historic environments belong to all Americans and that each of us bears a responsibility to help save them. But it did not. The National Trust chose to invite each "Initiate-elect" to the charitable equivalent of a country club dance.

This sort of advertisement smacks of class bias and while it may attract some donors it will--in fact, is **designed to**--exclude others; a position which is not only morally indefensible but tactically costly, as well. The environmental movement experienced similar problems with some of their advertising efforts. Gerry Stover analyzed advertising strategies of the ten largest environmental organizations. He found that "when the 'Group of Ten' publicized their efforts on behalf of the environment they used the standard advertising techniques...posters, print and electronic media ads, and direct marketing strategies all [of which] emphasize their middle class nature." Stover pointed out that one of the problems of these large environmental groups is "institutionalized racism". The staffs of environmental organizations, he found, like their top executives were "predominantly white and middle or upper class, usually children of the elite...who [could] afford to





take positions with little or no pay."<sup>10</sup> Since there was little minority representation on their boards, he suggested, these groups paid scant attention to the issues of minority communities. The historic preservation movement shares a similar history. Much effort has gone into preserving the houses and business-places of the elite, many of which were designed and constructed by an elite and are largely enjoyed by elites. While this is not inherently racist, it is hardly sensitive either. Stover suggested that, since the "Group of Ten" spent so little time familiarizing themselves with issues which concerned low-income and minority groups, they found that "when they wanted to recruit a broader base of members they had no relevant materials or issues with which to woo them."<sup>11</sup>

The preservation movement, which has worked hard to rhetorically position its cause as "environmentalist" and stressed the movements shared goals, must accept that this racism of omission is yet another area which the two movements share in common. Stover also suggested that, rather than the representatives of populist interests the "Group of Ten" was more closely aligned with the American establishment than with the causes of environmental and social justice. Such sentiments, too, are reflected in the preservation

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<sup>10</sup> Gerry Stover, "Media, Minorities and the Group of Ten." *Gannett Center Journal*. Volume 4, Number 3, Summer 1990. 37

<sup>11</sup> Gerry Stover, "Media, Minorities and the Group of Ten." *Gannett Center Journal*. Volume 4, Number 3, Summer 1990. 37



movement's literature. The 1981 Report from the Advisory Council on Preservation observed that "historic preservation is, from almost any perspective, no longer an embattled cause. It is...the establishment."<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the preservation movement needs to look more carefully at the implications of such a self-congratulatory comment.

Preservation has much to learn from Thomas Paine. Less than a year after he arrived in America, Paine wrote and published *Common Sense*. Paine's pamphlet took up the cause to the people and inspired them, as Samuel Adams later testified, "loudly to call for a declaration of National independence." Paine did not stop there, however, but proceeded to publish essays which could "make those who could scarcely read understand." *The Rights of Man* became "an international best seller and...it probably had its greatest impact in politicizing the English Working people."<sup>13</sup>

What then does Paine have to teach the preservation movement? Above all, Paine realized that, it was impossible, to effect political change without popular or public support no matter what the power elite wanted. Realizing that he had to reach out to the people for this support, he made use of

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<sup>12</sup> Larry E. Tise, "Revising Priorities: Preservation Joins the Establishment." *History News* 36 (June 1981), 34.

<sup>13</sup> John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* in Pauline Maier, "No Sunshine Patriot" A Review of in the New York Times Book Review, March 12, 1995



the most accessible medium available at the time: the pamphlet. Moreover, he wrote to appeal to the emotions as well as the intellect to win "hearts and minds."

If late 20th-century preservationists want to marshal the broad public support essential to their efforts, they must, like Paine, use the most accessible media, and the most powerful language--visual as well as textual-- of their day. Motion pictures are "in the 20th-century what the popular low priced pamphlet was in the 17th-century - an important and influential vehicle by which 'special pleaders'...bring their case before the public."<sup>14</sup> Preservation must use the modern "pamphlets" of motion pictures, as Paine did, to "make those who scarcely [consider it] understand."

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Leab, "The Moving Image as Interpreter of History-Telling the Dancer from the Dance." in John O' Connor, editor. *Image As Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television*. (Malabar, Florida. Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1990.), 74.



## APPENDIX

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION RELATED MOTION PICTURES

**Title:** *The City* (1939) 16mm, video

**Production Agency:** American Documentary Films for American Institute of Planners

**Source:** Museum of Modern Art, Indiana Audio Visual Center

Motion picture produced for the 1939 Worlds Fair by Civic Films. Directed by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, Scenarios by Henwar Rodkiewicz, Narration by Lewis Mumford, Score by Aaron Copland. Landmark documentary in both style and content, focuses on the quality of life in American towns and cities and proposes new approach to town design: Greenbelt cities. Sponsored by the American Institute of Planners.

**Title:** *Williamsburg Restored* (1951)

**Production Agency:** Colonial Williamsburg Foundation 16mm

**Source:** Pennsylvania State Audio Visual Services

Produced by Julien Bryan and directed by Francis Thompson for Colonial Williamsburg, this documentary tells the story of the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Perhaps the first film produced which has as its focus aspects of historic preservation. Chronicles the painstaking research involved in recreating the former Colonial capital.





**Title:** *Skyscraper* (1959)

**Production Agency:** Shirley Clarke with Willard Van Dyke

**Source:** Museum of Modern Art film study collection

Early independant anti-development/pro-preservation work which relies heavily on irony. Story focuses on the construction of an international-style skyscraper at 666 Park Avenue in NYC.

**Title:** *New Face on Capitol Hill* (1962) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Georgia Marble Company

**Source:** Georgia Marble Company

Features restoration work on the Capital from 1958 to 1961 including quarry-work and reproduction of carvings. Primarily a promotional film for marble industry but features aspects of preservation nonetheless.

**Title:** *Thanatopsis* (1962) 16mm

**Production Agency:** University of Southern California

**Source:** Film-Makers Cooperative

Visual study, by filmmaker Ed Emshwiller, of the architectural details of an elaborately decorated Victorian house which is about to be demolished. There is no narrative, only the sounds of power saws and a heartbeat. The title derives from the Greek, Thanatos, an instinctual desire for death, but earlier Sanskrit origins suggest that "vanished" is also a possible meaning for this title.



**Title:** *Housemoving* (1968) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Carpenter Center for Visual Arts

**Source:** Phoenix Film and Video

Time-lapse study of the house-moving process. An 18th century New England house is rescued from destruction by relocation.

**Title:** *The Image of the City* (1969) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Charles and Ray Eames

**Source:** Pennsylvania State University Audio Visual Services

Examine problems of cities through use of a variety of visual representational means

**Title:** *L. A., Too Much* (1969) 16mm

**Production Agency:** University of California, Berkeley

Nostalgic look at the past as symbolized in the long life and violent "death" of a Victorian House. Another hectoring look at building demolition, the above description taken directly from the program literature.

**Title:** *A City is People* (1970) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Stuart Finley, Inc.

Revitalization of downtown Washington, D.C., through urban renewal and private preservation projects.



**Title:** *Faneuil Hall Markets* (1970) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Urbanimage Films

**Source:**Urbanimage

First of three films dealing with the history of the food markets, reasons for their decline and an analysis of the rehabilitation project under way.

**Title:***The Fall of An American Architecture* (1970) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Metropolitan Museum of American Art

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Film produced as part of the "Rise of an American Architecture Centennial Exhibition" for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Later a shortened version of this film was distributed as a PSA for the National Trust. The film features images of a wrecking crew demolishing a Romanesque structure while a tolling bell provides the only audio.

**Title:** *A Future For the Past* (1971) 16mm

**Production Agency:**The Civic Trust of England

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Planning and historic preservation efforts in English Towns. Presents complex architectural and preservation concepts and goals in a concise and understandable manner. Could serve as a benchmark of how preservation motion pictures should be constructed for an American audience.



**Title:** *The Old Post Office* (1972) 16mm

**Production Agency:** National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

A review of the Architectural merits of this St. Louis landmark and interviews with the persons attempting to find an adaptive use for the building.

**Title:** *Out of Sticks and Stones* (1972) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Utah Heritage Foundation

**Source:** Utah Heritage Foundation

Utah's need for preservation is shown in a survey of the states history through its architectural environment.

**Title:** *The Brownstones of Brooklyn* (1972) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Brooklyn Union Gas Co.

**Source:** Bob Bailey Studio

The story of the revival of brownstone buildings in Brooklyn, NY. Traces styles in architecture and interviews people involved with the restorations.

**Title:** *Charleston, Room for a Way of Life* (1973) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Visual Public Relations

A pictorial essay on the quality of life in "the best preserved city" in the country.





**Title:** *As Papa Wanted It* (1974) 16mm

**Production Agency:** A Jody Saslow Film

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

This documentary provides insight into the planning process involved in the restoration and preservation of the Old Merchant's House in New York City. Explores the roles of the people involved from fundraisers to historians to architects.

**Title:** *Claw* (1974) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Manfred Kircheimer

**Source:** Manfred Kircheimer Productions

Visual essay dramatizes issues of urban renewal by focusing on a demolition machine whose claw-like apparatus tears apart a stone building. A poetic look at how progress can have negative implications for historic structures. Another in what is a, by now, obvious and somewhat trite treatment of building demolition.

**Title:** *Building, The Chicago Stock Exchange* (1975) (video)

**Production Agency:** University of Illinois at Chicago

**Source:** Wayne Boyer

12 minute documentary tells the story of the unsuccessful attempt made to save Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler's Chicago Stock Exchange. Richard Nickel, architectural photographer, died documenting the demolition.



**Title:** *Working Places* (1975) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Society for Industrial Archeology

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation

Although actually a photographic-slide presentation transferred to motion picture film, the "documentary" offers insights into the potential of adaptive-use of industrial sites. Directed by John Karol, who later made several films for the National Trust

**Title:** *Memory for the Future* (1975) 16mm

**Source:** Preservation League of New York State

Documents the revitalization of Seattle, including the creation of historic districts and renovation and adaptive use projects such as Pioneer Square.

**Title:** *Newburyport, A Measure of Change* (1975) video 16mm

**Production Agency:** Lawrence Rosenblum/Urbanimage

**Source:** Urbanimage

Documentary about historic preservation and urban renewal in Newburyport, Massachusetts. It examines the efforts of an urban renewal program to help reverse the slow economic and physical deterioration of a community, and shows how these efforts awakened public awareness to the value and potential of preserving an architectural heritage. The film documents Newburyports ten year effort to rehabilitate its nineteenth century commercial center and emphasizes the role



that citizen's groups played. It also traces the evolution of architectural design and land use, which made the city's renewal efforts a subject of nationwide preservation and planning interest.

**Title:** *Pride of the Capital City* (1975) 16mm

**Source:** National Trust For Historic Preservation

Documents the heyday and eventual demise of the famous Broadwater Hotel, a Helena, Montana landmark, now demolished.

**Title:** *Boston's Railroad Palace* (1975) 16mm, video

**Production Agency:** Wheaton A. Holden

**Source:** Wheaton A. Holden

Animated recreation of the Providence Railroad Station in Boston, designed by Peabody and Stearns, the building was destroyed.

**Title:** *Weeksville: Save the Memory of Self* (1976) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Historic Weeksville

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Documents the efforts of a group of African-Americans to preserve Weeksville, in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. This community was one of the earliest neighborhoods of free African-Americans in the United States. Poignantly rendered and rare in that it shows African-American preservationists in an active preservation role,



rather than the more typical (and perhaps, racist) portrayal as a group displaced by gentrification, and at the mercy of urban renewal and preservation schemes.

**Title:** *Adaptive Reuse* (1976) 16mm

**Production Agency:** National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

15 minute documentary which illustrates the successful adaptation of older buildings to new commercial and residential uses in New Orleans, La.

**Title:** *Forever Furness* (1976) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Temple University

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Surveys the career and work of architect Frank Furness; including footage of the restoration of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

**Title:** *The Legacy of Hanover Square* (1976) 16mm/video

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

A history of the buildings and events which shaped Hanover Square in Syracuse, New York and how they are being preserved and integrated into a growing city.





**Title:** *Collar City Song* (1976) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Troy Public Library

**Source:** Preservation League of New York

This film celebrates the industrial history of Troy, N.Y. and advocates for the preservation of this historical past.

**Title:** *The Grand Idea* (1977) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Arden Films

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Documentary which illustrates techniques used in the restoration of the cast iron facade of the Wilmington (DE) Opera House, built in 1891. Tells story of the planning and community participation necessary to save this structure, offers insight into the cooperation necessary between citizens and local government to save an historic structure.

**Title:** *Milltown* (1977) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Gary Samson/Denise Perrault

**Source:** University of New Hampshire

Filmed at the Amoskeag Textile Mill development in Manchester New Hampshire, the film discusses the need for preservation of historic mill architecture among other topics.



**Title:***Old Capitol: Restoration of a Landmark*(1977) 16mm video

**Source:**University of Iowa AV Center

Traces the story of the restoration of the State Capitol in Des Moines, Iowa.

**Title:***A Place in Time* (1977) 16mm

**Production Agency:** National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Documents the growth of historic preservation in the United States. Reflects upon traditional preservation achievements and visits 11 communities engaged a range of more "modern" preservation efforts. Important film which attempts to establish preservation as both a quality of life and environmental concern. A John Karol Film sponsored by the National Trust and produced with a grant from Bird and Son - a building supplies manufacturer.

**Title:***A Sense of Place* 1977 16mm

**Production Agency:**University of New Hampshire

**Source:**University of New Hampshire

Documents the trials and tribulations of a young couple as they attempt to restore an 18th century house.



**Title:***Bethlehem: In Search of Community* (1977) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Eagle Movie Company

**Source:**Eagle Movie Company

Explores the impact of restoration and renewal on the residents of Bethlehem, Pa.

**Title:***Changing the Channel: The Renovation Question.* (1977) video

**Production Agency:**National Trust For Historic Preservation

**Source:**National Trust For Historic Preservation

Examines Both side of the renovation issue in New Orleans through interviews with housing experts, residents, city officials and real estate developers. Such issues as land values, displacement and land shortage are discussed.

**Title:***They Came to Build: Reconstruction of Bent's Fort* (1977) 16mm

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (Archive)

Traces the reconstruction of an historic adobe fort utilizing original construction techniques.

**Title:***Carolina Dwelling* (1978) 16mm, video

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation(Archival)

Examines how six traditional european dwelling types were translated into vernacular styles in Carolina.



**Title:***The Little Rock Story: New Uses for Old Buildings*  
(1978) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Museum of Science and History

**Source:**Arkansas Educational TV Network

A discussion of the advantages of adaptive use, includes discussions with business community, city and state officials and architects.

**Title:***The Morse Libby House: Restoration of the Cornices*  
(1978) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Smithsonian Inst. Off. of Museum Programs

**Source:**Metropolitan Museum of Art

Conservation problems and issues at the Morse Libby house in Portland, Maine are discussed by conservator Morgan Phillips. Outlines work undertaken to counteract the effects of water damage on the wood cornices and the brownstone facade.

**Title:***Neighbors: Conservation in a Changing Community* (1978)  
16mm

**Production Agency:**National Trust and "Neighbors"

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Documents the story of neighborhood conservation in the South End of Boston including some of the historic architecture contained therein.





**Title:***The Rescue of Mr. Richardson's Last Station* (1978)16mm

**Production Agency:**John Gordon Hill & New London Landmarks

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

Surveys H.H. Richardson's career as the film recapitulates the struggle to preserve the famous architect's last train station.

**Title:***H.H. Richardson: Architect of the New American Suburb*  
(1978) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Fogg Fine Arts Films

**Source:**MOMA, Penn State

This 26 minute documentary is narrated by architectural historian John Coolidge. Explores Richardson work and his role in suburban design, features a number of restored Richardson buildings.

**Title:** *The City Farmstead,* (1978) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Energy Productions

**Source:** Phoenix Films and Video

15 minute documentary produced by Steve Greenberg documents an adaptive use project undertaken by Farallones Institute in Berkeley, California. Traces process as a Victorian era house is transformed into the Integral Urban House, an ecologically efficient habitat.



**Title:***Hyde Park* (1978) 16mm/video

**Production Agency:**Ralph Arlick Films

**Source:** Penn State Audio Visual Services

Examines the threat of over-development in an historic New York community. Chronicles various points of view including those of developers, preservationists and long-time residents. A prize winner at the National Trust for Historic Preservation Film Festival.

**Title:***Bringing In Business* (1979)

**Title:***Investing in Your Image* (1979)

**Title:***The Four Point Approach* (1979) video

**Production Agency:**National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation

Several of a series of instructional videotapes produced by the National Trust to accompany the Main Street program.

**Title:** *Main Street* (1979) 16mm

**Production Agency:**National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Source:** National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

An outgrowth of the National Trust's Main Street Program, the film encourages citizens to rediscover and build upon the assets of downtown. Features business people and revitalization activities in typical American communities; shows the importance of well designed physical improvements to the success of economic revitalization.



**Title:***Golden Dome* (1979) 16mm

**Source:**National Trust for Historic Preservation (archive)

A non-narrated visual exploration of the restoration of the Richard Upjohn-designed State Capitol Building in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Title:***Houses Have History* (1980) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Churchill Films

**Source:**Churchill Films

Group of young people are taught the values of preservation and restoration as they study the history of a number of old houses and buildings, includes discussion of architectural styles.

**Title:***Bronx River Restoration* (1980) video

**Production Agency:**Lawrence Rosenblum and Michael Rubin

**Source:**Urbanimage

A look at a South Bronx community action project which employed young people to clean up and revitalize the Bronx River and its surrounding communities.



**Title:***Pan Pacific* (1980) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Southern California Landscape Architects

**Source:**Pelican Films

Documentary on issues pertaining to the preservation of the Pan Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles California. The building was threatened by a local government decision to build a park on it's site and demolish the building. Documentary presents historical information and cites the buildings architectural merit as reasons for preservation

**Title:***Survival of a Small City* (1981) 16mm

**Production Agency** Nancy Salzer and Pablo Frasconi

Portrait of the conflicts within a deteriorating urban industrial neighborhood undergoing the stresses and contradictions of planned economic revitalization and historic preservation.

**Title:***Last Call for Union Station* (1981) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Doris Loeser and Lance Buflo

**Source:**University of Southern California

Documentary utilizes old still and motion picture photography and matches it to current footage to contrast Union Station's past with its present. The filmmakers make a subtle plea for the revival of rail transportation and advocate the reuse of Union Station as its center.





**Title:***Union Station Elegy* (1981) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Art Danek

**Source:**Ralph Danek

Depicts the abandonment and deterioration of Union Station in Worcester Massachusetts.

**Title:***The Oaklands* (1982) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Michael A. Stenner

This film traces the history and renovation of the Oaklands, an Italianate villa located on the campus of the Western Michigan University.

**Title:***Street of Ships* (1982) 16mm, video

**Production Agency:**Charles Richards Productions

Documents the preservation of the old seaport area of New York City, led to the creation of the South Street Seaport Museum Area.

**Title:***California Capitol Restoration: Too Splendid to Lose* (1983) 16mm video

**Production Agency:** Tellens

**Source:**University of California Extension Center

Illustrates the historical detective work involved in the restoration of the California Capitol building. Utilizes computer animation and archival materials to illustrate the changes in the buildings through the years.



**Title:***California Capitol Restoration: For California: A Capitol Restoration* (1984) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Tellens, Inc.

**Source:**University of California Extension Center

Follow up to California Capital Restoration

**Title:** *Grand Central* (1984) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Phillip Morris International

**Source:**Syracuse University Film Video Rental Center

The story of Grand Central Terminal including the fight by preservationists to save the building from demolition. Film makes a strong case for the preservation of landmarks. Produced by Nelson Breen and directed by Jules Potocsny.

**Title:***Little Rock and Preservation* (1984) video

**Production Agency:**Museum of Science and History

**Source:**Arkansas Educational TV Network

Documents preservation in the community of Little Rock, AK.

**Title:***For the Common Good: Preserving Public Lands with Conservation Easements* (1985)

**Production Agency:**The Land Trust Alliance video

**Source:**Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Explores methods of land conservation and preservation through the use of easements.



**Title:***Sam Daggett's House* (1985) 16mm

**Production Agency:** Will Lawson Productions

**Source:**Penn State Audio Visual Services

Documents the dismantling and reconstruction of an 18th century farmhouse as it is moved to Greenfield Village in Michigan. Focuses on the process of dismantling and the care and precision of the workers, dubious preservation however.

**Title:***America by Design* (1986) video, 16mm

**Production Agency:**Guggenheim Productions

**Source:**Pennsylvania State Audio Visual Services

This five part series of documentaries explores the history of America's built environment. Spiro Kostof wrote and narrated this ambitious series on American architecture. Each of the five parts explores a different aspect of the built environment beginning with *The House* and proceeding through *The Workplace*, *The Street*, *Public Places* and *Monuments* and concluding with *The Shape of the Land*.

**Title:***Pride of Place: A Series* (1986) 16mm video

**Production Agency:**Malone Gill Productions

**Source:**Penn State Audio Visual Services

Preservation is tangentially discussed in this 8-part series on American architecture. Directed by Murray Grigor and written and hosted by Robert A.M. Stern this series is unfortunately an abysmal failure. This production is so



unpalatable that it might set back the funding of architectural-motion pictures for years to come; it is the White City of built-environment motion pictures. All the more sad because Stern's pedantry distracts the viewer from the brilliant architectural cinematography of Terry Hopkins and Buddy Squires. A textbook on how to photograph architecture for motion pictures.

**Title:***Maintaining A Sense of Place* (1987) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Romona K. Mullahey 16mm

**Source:**American Planning Association

**Title:***Roswell: Preserving the Legacy* (1987) video

**Production Agency:**Visual Arts of America

**Source:**Georgia Department of Natural Resources

**Title:***Question of Balance: Art and Redevelopment in Old Pasadena* (1987) video

**Production Agency:** Art Center College of Design

**Source:**University of California Extension Center.

Archival footage of California in the 1930's is used to tell the story of the historic development of Pasadena and the threats of new development on the historic city.





**Title:***Renewing of a Vision: Frank Lloyd Wright's Meyer May House* (1987) video 16mm

**Production Agency:**Steelcase, Inc.

**Source:**Steelcase, Inc.

Documents the restoration of Wright's Meyer May House in Michigan, focuses on the careful research and the restoration itself.

**Title:***Survival of a Small City* (1987) video

**Production Agency:**Nancy Salzer; Pablo Frasconi

**Source:**Film-makers Library

The decline and revival of Norwalk, Connecticut is tracked over an eight year timeframe. Investigates preservation issues such as neighborhood preservation, gentrification, adaptive use. A follow-up to an earlier motion picture of the same title.

**Title:***Encore on Woodward: Detroit's Fox Theatre* (1988)  
35mm,video

**Production Agency:**Sue Marks Films

**Source:**Sue Marx Films

Traces history of this theatre, utilizes historical footage and culminates with the restoration process.



**Title:***Patterns of Change: Historic Preservation in Georgia*  
(1988) 16mm, video

**Production Agency:**Georgia Department of Natural Resources

**Source:**Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Uses Archival footage to discuss the importance of the preservation of historic buildings and the relationship between the preservation ethic and quality of life.

**Title:***Preserving an Architectural Heritage: The Decorative Designs of Frank Lloyd Wright* (1989) video

**Production Agency:**Smithsonian Institution

**Source:**Smithsonian Institution Office of Telecommunications

This motion picture focuses on preserving the organic unity of Wrights buildings, including Wrights decorative arts designs, undertakes a very general discussion of some aspects of architectural preservation and includes photographs buildings designed by Wright which have been demolished.

**Title:** *For the Record: How HABS/HAER Document America's Heritage* (1989)

**Production Agency:**National Park Service video

**Source:**National Park Service



**Title:***America's Heritage: The Diplomatic Reception Rooms of the United States Department of State* (1990 ) 16mm, video

**Production Agency:**Carl Colby

While ostensibly a tour of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, this 58 minute documentary also explores the on-going restoration process of these rooms. Decorative arts are interspersed with the architectural restoration process and architect Allen Greenberg is interviewed.

**Title:** *Barn Again* (1990)

**Production Agency:**Nebraska Educational TV Network Video

**Source:**Nebraska Educational TV Network

**Title:***Educational Materials for the Built Environment* (1990)  
video

**Production Agency:**American Institute for Architecture,  
Kansas City

**Source:**American Institute for Architecture, Kansas City

**Title:***Newport Mansions* (1990)

**Production Agency:**Wave, Inc. video

**Source:**VideoTours

Film presents the history of Newport, R.I. and the development of the historic mansions. Highlights the work of the Preservation Society of Newport.



**Title:***A Century of Talents; 100 Years of Cleveland Architecture* (1991) video

**Production Agency:**American Inst. of Architects/Cleveland

**Source:**American Institute of Architects/Cleveland

**Title:***Ghosts Along the Freeway* (1991) 16mm, video

**Production Agency:**Christine Craton; Tim Schwab

**Source:**Unity Productions

Documents the destruction of two communities; one the heart of the African-American community, the other a white neighborhood of once fashionable houses. Utilized archival photographs and interviews to tell the story of the displacement of residents during the construction of Interstate 94 in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

**Title:***Renewing the Past: 1100 New York Avenue* (1991) video

**Production Agency:**Jennifer L. Gruber

**Source:**Direct Cinema, Ltd.

Follows the restoration of a Greyhound Bus terminal by architect Hyman Myers.





**Title:***Delivered Vacant* (1992) 16mm

**Production Agency:**Island Pictures: A Nore Jacobsen Film

**Source:**Islet, Inc.

Tells story of Hoboken, New Jersey which, during the 1980's, underwent a massive redevelopment funded by historic tax credits and based on real estate speculation. The film covers an eight years period of rehabilitation and ends with the real estate bust of the early 1990's.



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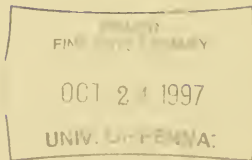
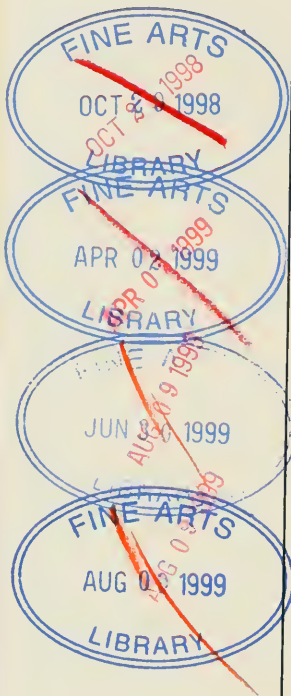


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