

THE EVOLUTION AND ROLE  
OF HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION  
WITHIN THE NORTH AMERICAN CITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

This work explores the evolution and contemporary role of historic and architectural preservation within the context of the North American City. The study traces and elucidates the growth and development of the North American urban preservation movement from its beginnings in the 19th Century through to the present day, and it analyses the contemporary role of historic and architectural preservation within the North American City by focussing upon justifications for preservation, problems that both confront and arise from preservation activity, processes that facilitate preservation action, and the implications of current trends in urban preservation. A case study of Vancouver, British Columbia, is included, and it provides an illustration of the evolution, role and effects of preservation philosophy and action in a young North American City.

In spite of a background of change, progress, and apparent apathy to architectural quality and urban design, a strong preservation movement has evolved within North America. Although initially all emphasis was placed on preserving merely those buildings associated with famous persons or famous events, the concept of preservation has gradually widened in scale and scope, and as a result, preservation has exerted a growing influence within the North American City. Architectural and aesthetic justifications for preservation have become particularly important, and attention has increasingly been directed towards the preservation of entire groups of buildings. Indeed, the preservation of historic districts has proved to be one of the most successful aspects of preservation activity

in North America, and this is effectively demonstrated by the example of Vancouver's Gastown.

The last twenty years have witnessed a tremendous expansion of the preservation movement and its activities, and this is reflected in the increasing sophistication of preservation processes and methods, and in the widespread application and growing popularity of preservation activities. It has become evident that the preservation of buildings and districts of historical and architectural significance can play an important role in making the North American City a more pleasant and stimulating place in which to live.

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N. B. All photographs were taken by the author.



CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In recent years increasing attention has been given to the quality of the North American environment.<sup>1</sup> The quality and character of both rural and urban environments has been drastically affected by increasing population, rapid advances in technology and communication, increasing industrialisation and other related factors. Environmental changes, and, in many cases, deterioration, are occurring at an ever-accelerating pace.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The past ten years have seen the publication of numerous studies on the quality of the North American environment. Some of the more important of these studies are as follows:- Orris C. Herfindahl and Allen V. Kneese, Quality of the Environment (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965); Henry Jarrett, ed., Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1966); Harvey S. Perloff, ed., The Quality of the Urban Environment: Essays on New Resources in an Urban Age (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969); Stewart L. Udall, The Quiet Crisis (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963); and William H. Whyte, The Last Landscape (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>These environmental changes are discussed in such important studies as:- Rachel L. Carson, Silent Spring (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962); F. Fraser Darling and John P. Milton, eds., Future Environments of North America (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1966); William R. Ewald, Jr., ed., Environment and Change: the Next Fifty Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968); Harold W. Helfrich, ed., The Environmental Crisis: Man's Struggle to Live With Himself (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Ian Nairn, The American Landscape: A Critical View (New York: Random House, 1965); and Robert Rienow and Leona Train Rienow, Moment in the Sun (New York: Dial Press, 1967).

In the Twentieth Century the cities of North America have seen great changes; the effect of phenomena such as the suburban explosion, the ever increasing use of the automobile, and the development of electronic media, has been to decentralise the relatively compact traditional city. The result is the development of a new type of urban form, which has been accompanied by what many urban critics regard as a decline in the standard of traditional city qualities.<sup>3</sup> In the past two decades in particular many writers have subjected the North American City to severe criticism, sometimes destructive and sometimes constructive.<sup>4</sup> Architects, planners, journalists, scholars and others have succeeded in arousing an awareness of the problems and troubles of the changing city, and this is reflected in a tremendous recent upsurge of interest and enthusiasm for revitalising

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<sup>3</sup>This new type of urban form, and the associated decline in traditional city qualities, is analysed in a growing number of literary works, of which some of the most notable are: Charles Abrams, The City is the Frontier (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); William R. Ewald, Jr., ed., Environment for Man: the Next Fifty Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967); Edmund K. Faltermayer, Redoing America (New York: Harper and Row, 1968); Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Random House, 1961); Gordon Mitchell, Sick Cities (New York: Macmillan, 1963); Lewis Mumford, The City in History (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961); and Roger Starr, Urban Choices: The City and Its Critics (New York: Coward McCann, 1966).

<sup>4</sup>See for example: Reyner Banham, Los Angeles: The Architecture of the Four Ecologies (London: Penguin Press, 1971); Leonard J. Duhl, ed., The Urban Condition (New York: Basic Books, 1963); The Editors of Fortune, The Exploding Metropolis (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958); Erwin Anton Gutkind, The Twilight of Cities (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962); Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Richard J. Whalen, A City Destroying Itself: An Angry View of New York (New York: Morrow, Wm. & Co., 1965); and Morton White and Lucia White, The Intellectual Versus the City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

the city. Whilst striking new forms arise on the urban skylines, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the preservation of historic and architecturally valuable urban elements can play a vital role within this overall revitalisation.

During the summer of 1968 the writer personally visited more than thirty major North American cities. In almost all of these, redevelopment schemes and renewal projects were conspicuous. But perhaps even more striking from the perspective of the visitor was the attempt being made by many of these cities to safeguard buildings and districts of historic and architectural merit from the pressures of modern development. In recollecting impressions of these cities, those that stand out must include New Orleans, Boston, San Antonio, Santa Fe, Montreal, Washington D.C. and San Francisco. Each of these possesses areas with their own distinctive character which in turn gives the city itself a distinctive atmosphere. The distinctiveness of these cities and many others has been maintained largely through the implementation of a conscious preservation effort.

To the geographer, historic and architectural preservation appears to be a neglected field of study. Geographers have for a long time been concerned with the morphology or form of urban environments (sometimes referred to as "townscape"<sup>5</sup>), particularly in Western Europe, but they have

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<sup>5</sup>See Arthur E. Smailes, "Some Reflections on the Geographical Description and Analysis of Townscapes," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, XXI (1955), pp. 99-115. Smailes writes about the "urban scene as a townscape, a tract of landscape distinct from its rural surroundings" (p. 99). A number of other studies, particularly ones in geography, architecture and town-planning, have subsequently utilised the word "townscape", thus popularizing the term. Some writers would appear to prefer the term "cityscape".

tended to be pre-occupied with urban plan (street patterns and the overall layout of the settlement) rather than with the actual buildings of the town or city,<sup>6</sup> although most would not deny the relevance of the latter to urban geography. Architects and architectural historians are the people who have traditionally given attention to the character and style of buildings and to the spaces between them. With problems of environmental quality growing in magnitude and complexity, the efforts of many are needed in order to attempt an understanding and work towards solutions; the geographer would appear to be well qualified to tackle such problems.

Ewart Johns in his book British Townscapes successfully combined geographical and architectural approaches in an excellent analysis of the built element of urban Britain.<sup>7</sup> In this he suggests that

...the geographer's studies of towns are much more comprehensive, in the physical sense, than are those of the architectural historian. Chiefly because the geographer so often looks at his subject 'from above', that is to say in map form, it is comparatively easy for him to get a complete picture of some aspects of a town.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See for example: Harold Carter, The Towns of Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1965); M. R. G. Conzen, Alnwick: A Study in Town-Plan Analysis (London: Institute of British Geographers, 1960); James H. Johnson, Urban Geography: An Introductory Analysis (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1967); Emrys Jones, Towns and Cities (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); Arthur J. Rose, Patterns of Cities (Melbourne: Nelson, 1967); and Arthur E. Smailes, The Geography of Towns (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1953).

<sup>7</sup>Ewart Johns, British Townscapes (London: Edward Arnold, 1965).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

Johns proposes that the geographer should go a stage further and give consideration to the architectural characteristics of buildings and districts, rather than merely contenting himself with analysis of vertical plans. Thus Johns suggests that the geographer might well be able to obtain an even more comprehensive view of urban morphology by adopting a three-dimensional perspective towards the study of towns.

The student of architecture, then, may well have something to learn from the wide ranging and balanced view of the geographer, while the latter may take note of the fact that towns are shaped as they are, not only because of their site and their functions, but very much, too, because architects, planners and builders have been at work in greater or lesser degree throughout history.<sup>9</sup>

But although Johns successfully justifies the concern of the geographer with all aspects of urban morphology, he does no more than merely touch upon the important concept of preservation of townscape.

On the other hand, J. Wreford Watson, in his article "Relict Geography in an Urban Community",<sup>10</sup> goes so far as to propose a distinct subsection of geography to be known as "relict geography". This article is an important pioneer study of the impact and influence of relicts on the creation of urban landscapes. According to Watson, "relicts are objects left behind in a process of change,"<sup>11</sup> and he gives much attention to the effects

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<sup>9</sup> Ewart Johns, British Townscapes (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> James Wreford Watson, "Relict Geography in an Urban Community," in Geographical Essays in Memory of Alan G. Ogilvie, ed. by Ronald Miller and James Wreford Watson (London: Nelson, 1959), pp. 110-143.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

of physical relicts ("relict relief"), relict roads, and relict residential areas on the development of Halifax, Nova Scotia. But Watson gives little consideration to the reasons for the retention of elements of earlier cultural landscapes, and he completely overlooks the role of historical and architectural preservation. Consideration of the factors responsible for the retention of relicts of earlier days would seem to be an essential part of a comprehensive discussion of relict geography. Nonetheless, Watson's concept of relict geography has contributed some valuable ideas as to the effects of relict objects on subsequent urban development, and his technique of mapping these effects is of particular interest.

It would seem that the geographer's comprehensive and spatial approach would readily lend itself to the study of urban preservation, but so far architecture and urban planning have been the disciplines most concerned with this field, and they have produced a considerable quantity of literature on specialised architectural, legal and technical aspects of preservation but little on the development of the preservation movement and its overall effect on urban build and form.

James H. Johnson in his Urban Geography provides a valuable insight as to the influence of preservation on urban build and form:

... change and resistance to change are normal features of the urban scene. In any city with a long history an imprint has been left on the urban fabric by the organisation and goals of past society and the functioning and economics of past technology. Sometimes those marks are still clear in whole quarters of a city; sometimes there is only a faint trace left in the arrangement of a few streets or in the survival of an independent building. The removal of those features from the past which impede the efficient functioning of a modern city is inevitable and should not be regretted too greatly. Equally, the

removal of vestiges of the past should not be undertaken lightly, since it is not inevitable that the contribution of some engineering triumph of the present will appear attractive or useful to future generations. The history of cities and their physical character are irretrievably bound together and to destroy that character unnecessarily is to lose part of an urban heritage.<sup>12</sup>

North Americans are becoming increasingly aware of the value of their urban heritage, and historic and architectural preservation appears to be playing an increasingly important role in affecting the North American urban environment. The geographer would thus appear to be quite justified in giving more attention to this important concept.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is, firstly, to trace and elucidate the evolution of historic and architectural preservation within the context of the changing North American City, and, secondly, to illustrate and interpret the role of historic and architectural preservation in the contemporary North American City. Thus essentially this study is an exploration of the interactions between an intellectual movement and the cultural landscape, and as such it is not intended to develop specific techniques for some agreed aim in urban preservation as has been frequently done in the past by architects and planners. There is an apparent absence of comprehensive literature on the North American urban preservation movement, its objectives, trials, accomplishments and possibilities. This study does not set out to provide an all-encompassing ultimate analysis of urban preservation; it is

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<sup>12</sup> Johnson, Urban Geography, pp. 41-42.

merely an attempt to shed greater light on the development and role of a concept and movement that would seem to have considerable influence on the appearance and formation of North American cities.

### Approach and Organisation

The first part of the study utilises a historical approach in order to explore the development of the preservation movement and its relationship to the North American City. The second section analyses the contemporary role of historic and architectural preservation in the North American City by examining the major justifications for preservation, the major problems that both confront and arise from preservation efforts, the major processes that facilitate preservation practice, and the implications of the growing popularity of preservation. The third section is a case study of Vancouver, British Columbia, and this provides an illustration of the evolution, role and effects of preservation thought and practice in a large, but historically young, West Coast North American City. The final section summarizes the main findings of the study, and outlines suggestions for further research.

The study is based upon a combination of library and field research, the latter being particularly important in the formation of the case study of Vancouver.

### Terminology

Before embarking upon an analysis of the evolution and role of historic and architectural preservation in the North American City, it is



necessary to define and explain the major terms that are utilised in this study.

Examination of preservation literature reveals a wide variation in terminology from one country to another, from one study to another, and even within the same study, even though in almost all cases the objectives of preservation activities are today basically the same. Even the term "preservation", as applied to historic and architectural elements, is somewhat controversial. The influential study on preservation undertaken by the Council of Europe in 1963 concluded that,

In view of the impossibility of finding an entirely satisfactory formula in terms valid in the various European languages, to describe the object of the proposal action, we have chosen a formula which, though perhaps provisional, does not depart from everyday language: 'The preservation and development of ancient buildings and historical and artistic sites'.<sup>13</sup>

Ralph W. Miner's survey for the American Society of Planning Officials uses the shorter and simpler term, "Historic and cultural conservation."<sup>14</sup> A combination of these two terms would appear to be desirable in order to obtain a clear and concise term. The Council of Europe study argues that, "The term 'preservation' is both more dynamic and broader than the word 'safe-guarding' which often describes a timid belated act, or the too timid

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<sup>13</sup> The Council of Europe, The Preservation and Development of Ancient Buildings and Historical or Artistic Sites (n.p.: Council of Europe, 1963), p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph W. Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1969), p. 3.

word 'conservation'."<sup>15</sup> In North America, the term "preservation" is undoubtedly much more frequently used than "conservation" when reference is being made to buildings of historic and architectural significance. Miner's choice of the word "cultural" might be questioned as in this context it is perhaps too wide and vague a concept. "Historic and architectural preservation" seems to be the most adequate term for this particular study.

"Historic and Architectural Preservation" is a broad and flexible term that might best be defined as the act of identifying, evaluating, protecting, and, in some cases renovating or restoring, those elements of an area that are deemed to be of historic and/or architectural significance. When reference is made to "historic and architectural preservation within urban environments", the term has in some cases been abbreviated to "Urban Preservation" in order to avoid repetition and increase coherence; unless it is specifically stated to the contrary, for the purposes of this study the two terms can be considered synonymous.

"Elements", as used in the above definition, usually take the form of individual buildings or structures that possess valuable historical and/or architectural qualities, and of entire districts composed of a number of such buildings; however, they may also be in the form of man-made outdoor objects such as statues and monuments, of man-made outdoor spaces such as streets and squares, and even of natural features such as trees, lawns and rocks, providing all such features possess historic and/or

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<sup>15</sup>The Council of Europe, The Preservation and Development of Ancient Buildings and Historical or Artistic Sites, p. 25.

architectural significance. But the common focus of preservation efforts in the urban environment is on buildings and districts of historical and architectural significance.

"Historic" and "Architectural" can be interpreted in a number of equally valid ways and often there is a considerable degree of overlap in these interpretations. "Historic" can refer to any element that has close associations with a person, group, organisation or institution considered to have been particularly influential in the life of a nation, region or community. Equally, it can refer to an element that is associated with a major event (cultural, political, economic, technological, social or military) in the life of the nation, region or community. Or it can merely refer to the age of the element: a 200-year old building in Eastern North America would almost certainly be considered "historic" in terms of age alone, and in Western Canada buildings that are less than 80 years old are considered "historic". The definition of "historic" in terms of age alone is necessarily very subjective, and is obviously relative to the length of settlement and age of surviving structures in the area under question. Some preservationists suggest arbitrary figures (such as 50, 75 or 100 years old) in order to distinguish between "historic" and non-historic buildings, but usually this is a somewhat futile exercise as the age of a building is in itself rarely a major justification for preservation. "Historic" might also refer to a building or district that is representative of a particular (historic) period or phase in the evolution of a nation, region or community, and it is here that the close overlap between "historical" and "architectural" makes itself clearly evident.

A building or structure may be considered to be of "Architectural" significance if it is a unique, rare or good example of a particular style of construction and/or craftsmanship, or if it is one of the few surviving examples within an area of the construction and design of a particular time period. Equally, a building or structure may be deemed to be of "architectural" significance if it is the work of a nationally, regionally or locally famous architect, if it possesses distinctive artistic and aesthetic qualities, and if it possesses an originality of craftsmanship or even building material. An undistinguished individual building may still be of "architectural" importance if it is an integral part of a group of buildings that in totality possess aesthetic and artistic qualities.

This study concentrates on Historic and Architectural Preservation within the context of the "North American City". This is again a somewhat loose concept, and in this study it refers to centres of settlement and culture within the spatial bounds of the United States and Canada that possess the characteristics of a city and are generally designated as such. There is no concise and universally acceptable definition of the word "City"; Webster's Dictionary defines it as "...any large, important, or noted town or inhabited place, so called by way of distinction." A more rigid definition in terms of population size, functions, etcetera, seems unnecessary for the purposes of this study, as such a definition would only be relevant to one particular time period. In this study, emphasis is given to historic and architectural preservation in large urban communities that are generally referred to as cities on account of their population size and

character, physical structure and range of functions.<sup>16</sup> The use of the word "City" in the singular implies a certain degree of uniformity in the characteristics of North American Cities. Raymond Murphy argues in his book The American City that, "...in a sense, every city is unique, but they have much in common, and what one can learn about the American city as a type should help anyone interested in understanding any individual American city".<sup>17</sup> This study is concerned not only with the American city, but also with the Canadian city. It seems to be justifiable to group the two together under the heading of "The North American City" for reasons of simplification and convenience, and, more important, because of the close similarities that do undeniably exist between Canadian and American cities, especially with regard to their physical characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>See Raymond E. Murphy, The American City: An Urban Geography (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), pp. 10-34, for a detailed discussion of the definition of the term "city".

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>See James Simmons and Robert Simmons, Urban Canada (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969). This work includes a brief comparison of the characteristics of Canadian and American cities (pp. 11-14). ✓

## CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT  
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE NORTH AMERICAN CITYThe Setting

The cities of North America are, in general, hardly famed for their architectural and historical qualities, especially when compared to their counterparts in the earlier urbanised regions of the world, such as Europe and the Middle East. For a long time the aesthetic qualities of North American cities received little attention; North America lacked a strong urban tradition and indeed anti-urban and agrarian philosophies held sway for many decades.<sup>1</sup> Progress and the future have been all important in the culture of the United States and, but perhaps to a lesser extent, in Canada; this concern with the future would appear to be a reflection of the dominant Puritan ethic and might be interpreted as a legacy of the frontier spirit. This philosophy of progress has had a marked effect on North American urban landscapes. According to David Lowenthal;

Americans build for tomorrow, not for today...The current American scene is not a finished landscape, but an embryo of future greatness. Meanwhile we endure protracted labor pains. Vast areas of our cities are occupied by wrecking crews and bulldozers, sand and gravel, rubble and structural elements --

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<sup>1</sup>See Morton White and Lucia White, The Intellectual Versus the City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

semipermanent wastelands dedicated to Tomorrow. A large proportion of the cityscape is in painful gestation at any time. The vaguest tidings of Urban Renewal, if sufficiently sweetened and sign-posted, persuade the citizen to suffer the laying waste of his city for years on end.<sup>2</sup>

Pushkarev states that "The tradition of temporary, makeshift construction has long roots in the American past. Our downtowns and suburbs still bear the imprint of frontier-camp design."<sup>3</sup> And Sir Shane Leslie in his American Wonderland observed that, "The American sign of civic progress is to tear down the familiar and erect the monstrous."<sup>4</sup>

Built-in obsolescence has become an integral part of the North American way of life, and this is just as true of the built element of the cities as it is of consumer goods.

If an automobile is built to last ten years, and a refrigerator, maybe, fifteen, why should a building be built to last more than forty or fifty? ... Elaborate arguments can be presented in favour of a disposable environment, and some of the more convincing ones have to do with the rapidity of social change and the economic burden that a rigid, but technologically obsolete environment imposes; others hinge on the unpredictability of future requirements.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>David Lowenthal, "The American Scene," Geographical Review, LVIII, No. 1 (1968), pp. 75-76.

<sup>3</sup>Boris Pushkarev, "Scale and Design in a New Environment," in Who Designs America?, ed. by L. B. Holland (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>Sir Shane Leslie, American Wonderland: Memories of Four Tours in the United States of America, 1911-1935 (London: M. Joseph, 1936), p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>Pushkarev, "Scale and Design in a New Environment," p. 111.

Charles Abrams comments that "...age in America is still equated with obsolescence"<sup>6</sup>, and that "...cultural ties to a past never gained root in an America whose cities were springing up almost overnight. Most of its buildings are of recent origin and were built for speculation, not use."<sup>7</sup> The result is a tradition of rapid turnover of structures, especially in central city areas, and this phenomenon is regarded by many people as an indication of continued progress and prosperity.

The turnover rate of buildings (i.e. the rate at which buildings are torn down to be replaced by new structures) is an interesting concept that has so far received little scholarly attention. It would appear that in most North American cities the greatest turnover rate of buildings occurs in the central business district, or the "downtown" area as it is more popularly known<sup>8</sup>, where land values are at their highest and where

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Abrams, The City is the Frontier (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this study the terms "downtown" and "central business district" can be considered to be loosely inter-changeable in that both terms refer to the commercial core or major business section of a city. The term "central business district" (often abbreviated to "CBD") is widely used in North American geographical literature, but in non-geographical circles the more flexible term "downtown" would appear to be more popular. Many North American cities possess in addition areas that are commonly referred to as "up-town" or "mid-town", but it is only in rare cases that these districts coincide with the dominant commercial cores. In most North American cities the area popularly known as "downtown" is the major commercial core. See James H. Johnson, Urban Geography: An Introductory Analysis (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1967), pp. 105-107, for discussion of the difficulties of defining terms such as "central business district" and "downtown".



there is greatest competition for space.<sup>9</sup> In almost all North American cities, the present-day downtown areas are located in or immediately adjacent to the oldest parts of the city; only in very rare instances do downtowns shift very far from their initial sites.<sup>10</sup> Thus it is in the downtown areas and their immediate peripheries that buildings and districts of historic and architectural value are most likely to be found provided that they have survived the onslaught of natural disasters (especially fires), generations of speculative development, the demands of transportation, technological changes, the more recent urban renewal projects, and the gradual attrition caused by structural deterioration (see Plate 1).

The pressures on an individual structure are at their greatest in the downtown area, and in most large cities downtown buildings are fortunate to be able to count their lives in decades, let alone generations! Thus in spite of the fact that in most North American cities the downtown core has hardly moved in a horizontal or lateral sense, it is indeed rare for there to be more than a scattered relict or two (usually churches) dating back more than a century other than that of the basic street layout,

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<sup>9</sup> See William Alonso, Location and Land Use: Toward a General Theory of Land Rent (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Brian J. L. Berry, Commercial Structure and Commercial Blight: Retail Patterns and Processes in the City of Chicago (Chicago: Chicago University Department of Geography, 1963); Johnson, Urban Geography, pp 109-113; Richard F. Muth, Cities and Housing: The Spatial Patterns of Urban Residential Land Use (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); and Roger Starr, Urban Choices: The City and Its Critics (New York: Coward McCann, 1966), pp. 144-149.

<sup>10</sup> See Smailes, The Geography of Towns (Hutchinson's University Library: London, 1966), pp. 121-122.



Plate 1: Growth and Decay in New York City.— Old brick houses decay in the shadow of Manhattan's financial district skyscrapers. Restoration and the enactment of preservation legislation could transform this historic streetscape. Scenes similar to this can be observed in many North American cities.

<sup>11</sup> See Swales, *The Geography of Towns*, pp. 119-120. According to Swales: "It is much easier to replace buildings than to make substantial alterations to an established ground plan. . . . The plan of a town is much less susceptible to change and tends therefore to be older than its skyline. Throughfares are more enduring than the buildings that line them and are often as old or older than the town itself" (pp. 119-120).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>13</sup> See Alonso, *Location and Land Use*.

which is something that rarely changes.<sup>11</sup> The downtown cores of most North American cities are in a process of continual rejuvenation, but it is common for the areas immediately adjacent to the present-day central business district to have escaped extensive destruction to the extent that they still possess many individual structures of historic and architectural interest, and in some cases, entire districts.<sup>12</sup> In general, the turnover rate of buildings declines with distance from the downtown core, in relation to the decline in land values and decline in competition for space.<sup>13</sup> In rural areas, where land values and competition for specific sites are at their lowest, it is quite common for buildings to survive intact for many generations, even centuries (e.g. wooden farm houses in rural New England), in spite of the prevailing cultural climate of planned obsolescence.

The destruction of historic and architecturally significant structures is thus at its greatest in the cities; to many people, old buildings and historic districts are merely obstacles in the way of progress. In other continents, especially those in which there is a greater concern for the past, historic buildings will survive for centuries without fear

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<sup>11</sup>See Smailes, The Geography of Towns, pp. 119-120. According to Smailes; "It is much easier to replace buildings than to make substantial alterations in an established ground plan... . The plan of a town is much less susceptible to change and tends therefore to be older than its profile. Thoroughfares are more enduring than the buildings that line them and are often as old or older than the town itself" (pp. 119-120).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>13</sup>See Alonso, Location and Land Use.

of destruction, even in the cities, but it is significant that in the United States, about half of the 12,000 structures listed by the Historic America Building Survey in the 1930's as being of historical or architectural significance have already been destroyed. "We live in throwaway stage sets."<sup>14</sup>

It is against this background of change and progress, and probably as a counter-action to it, that a strong preservation movement has evolved. "...As we become increasingly disenchanted with a throwaway culture that designs buildings meant to last no longer than their mortgages, there are an increasing number of public efforts to protect our cultural inheritance..." observed Wolf Von Eckardt in 1970.<sup>15</sup> The interest in historic and architectural preservation has reached unprecedented levels in recent years, but this is not to say that preservation is a new concept to North America. Indeed, beneath this image of a throwaway North American architectural landscape, a vocal and active preservation movement has long been at work, fighting against the odds.

The history of the North American preservation movement appears to be characterised by three fairly distinctive phases or stages of

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<sup>14</sup>Lowenthal, "The American Scene", p. 76.

<sup>15</sup>Wolf Von Eckardt, "Saving Our Landmarks", Saturday Review, September 5, 1970, p. 52.

development.<sup>16</sup> The first phase, from the beginning of the Nineteenth Century up to 1910, is distinguished by an overwhelming emphasis on the preservation of buildings associated with famous persons or events; architectural and aesthetic qualities were of relatively little importance in this first phase. The second phase, from 1910 to 1950, is marked by a growing concern for the architectural and aesthetic qualities of buildings and districts, and by a gradual widening of the whole concept of preservation. The third phase, from 1950 to the present day, is distinguished by a tremendous growth in the impact and influence of the North American preservation movement.

#### Preservation in North America: Up to 1910

In the 18th Century and early 19th Century America was generally regarded as a new land, "The New World", and all emphasis was put on the future and on progress at the expense of the past. In the rapidly growing cities buildings were erected and torn down at an alarming rate; "the desire to turn a quick dollar by real estate manoeuvre or new construction took precedence over everything else."<sup>17</sup> Hence when in 1808 the First Church of Boston sold its "Old Brick" meetinghouse of 1713 for demolition,

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<sup>16</sup>See Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg (New York: Putnam, 1965), and Special Committee on Historic Preservation - United States Conference of Mayors, With Heritage So Rich (New York: Random House, 1966) for detailed discussion of the main phases in the development of the North American preservation movement.

<sup>17</sup>Walter Muir Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory - The Origin of Preservation in the United States", in With Heritage So Rich, p. 36.

an indignant broadminded proto-preservationist complained in the Independent Chronicle:

If a proposition had been made in London, Paris or Amsterdam to the society owning the First Church of either of those respectable cities, to sell (on a principle of speculation) their ancient edifice, it would have been spurned with indignation -- the trifling profit anticipated by the sale would never have led the proprietors to have razed a house of worship so well repaired as the Old Brick to gratify the rapacity of a few men who trouble society both in Church and State. After the demolition of the Old Brick, there is scarcely a vestige of antiquity in the town.<sup>18</sup>

It is significant that even if preservation action was nonexistent at this early age, there were already preservationist sympathies being expressed, as in the above quotation. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., in his classic Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg, expresses the view that "The American Preservation Movement is nearly as old as the country itself", and he proceeds to cite evidence of preservationist sentiments dating as far back as 1796.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, interest and sentiment towards preservation were not to convert themselves into action for another fifty years.

Values in the historical past did gradually come to be realised, especially after 1850 when historical awareness at last began to express itself in successful preservation efforts. Until fairly recently historic preservation in the U.S.A. was primarily concerned with buildings in which

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<sup>18</sup>Walter Muir Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory - The Origin of Preservation in the United States," in With Heritage So Rich, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup>Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 29.

"great" men had lived or "great" events had taken place.<sup>20</sup> The emphasis was on their associative value rather than on their inherent architectural and aesthetic qualities, and the main purpose of preservation was to create museums which would provide inspiration for visitors. Hence the death of that great American hero, the first President of the U.S.A., George Washington, in a way heralded the real beginning of the North American preservation movement. "With such veneration being paid to his memory, it is not surprising that the earliest successful ventures in historic preservation within the United States were concerned with the preservation of scenes which Washington had known in his lifetime."<sup>21</sup>

Thus in 1850 the State of New York purchased the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh, a building which had served as Washington's headquarters during the last two years of the American Revolutionary War, and converted it into a public museum. The Governor of New York stated in his message to the legislature of that year,

there are associations connected with this venerable edifice which rise above consideration of dollars and cents... It is perhaps the last relic within the boundaries of the State, under the control of the legislature, connected with the history of the illustrious man (George Washington).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", pp. 35-44; Hosmer, Presence of the Past, pp. 21-259; and Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., The Living Past of America (New York: Bonanza Books, 1955).

<sup>21</sup> Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Caldwell, A True History of the Acquisition of Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh by the State of New York (Salisbury Mills, N.Y.: Stivers, Slauson and Boyd, 1887), p. 19. The quotation also appears in Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 36.

The 1850's were years of fierce emotional patriotism when "preservers were reformers teaching that disunion could be cured by a greater regard for the sacrifices of our Founding Fathers."<sup>23</sup> Preservationists played on patriotic values in a manner that today seems overly romantic:-

...If our love of country is excited when we read the biography of our revolutionary heroes, or the history of revolutionary events, how much more will the flame of patriotism burn in our bosoms when we tread the ground where was shed the blood of our fathers, or when we move among the scenes where were conceived and consummated their noble achievements ...No traveler who touches upon the shores of Orange County will hesitate to make a pilgrimage to this beautiful spot, associated as it is with so many delightful reminiscences in our early history, and if he have an American heart in his bosom, he will feel himself a better man; his patriotism will kindle with deeper emotion; his aspirations of his country's good will ascend from a more devout mind for having visited the 'Headquarters of Washington'.<sup>24</sup>

But in 1850 this sentimentalism was effective and Hasbrouck House was preserved for a legislative appropriation of only \$8391.02; North America had acquired its first official historic monument. But it was the preservation of George Washington's home, Mount Vernon in Virginia, six years later, that really set aflame the interest in historic preservation.

The future of Mount Vernon was in considerable jeopardy by 1853; rumours hinted of its conversion into a hotel or resort, and it was these rumours that spurred the preservationists into action. Mount Vernon was

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<sup>23</sup>Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 299.

<sup>24</sup>Caldwell, A True History of the Acquisition of Washington's Headquarters, pp. 21-23. Quoted in Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 36.



the estate that had the closest associations of all with George Washington, and as such there was great public concern over its destiny. After a long struggle beginning in 1853, Mount Vernon was eventually saved for the nation by the efforts of Miss Ann Cunningham of Virginia and the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union. They were able to succeed in raising nation-wide financial and moral support, and in reaching a settlement with John Washington, then owner of Mount Vernon. Indeed, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association succeeded where the Federal Government and the Commonwealth of Virginia had failed, thus establishing "a precedent for accomplishing the seemingly impossible, which has been the inspiration of preservation efforts ever since."<sup>25</sup> Mount Vernon was opened to the public as "a national shrine": from its preservation sprang "the tradition of carefully organised private effort as the means of securing the funds for historic preservation"<sup>26</sup>, and, closely related to this, the tradition of the involvement of womens' organisations in preservation. ✓

The American Civil War, 1861-65, put a temporary damper on preservation activities, but the period immediately after the war was to see the preservation of several notable country homes associated with famous people. "In the period following the Civil War, the scope of the Mount Vernon movement, together with the influence of the centennial of various phases of the Revolution, combined to create a deeper appreciation of

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<sup>25</sup> Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

historic sites."<sup>27</sup> As the wounds of the Civil War gradually healed, and as the 1876 Centennial approached, preservationists argued the case for a new sense of national patriotism and dedication, and they firmly believed that the preservation of the homes of "the great" could help this come about. Thus in 1876 the Old South Meeting House in Boston was safeguarded; this was the next major achievement of the preservationists after Mount Vernon, and it was to provide the first true example of preservation within the North American City. Until this point, preservation philosophy had only really had impact on a few scattered country homes and their estates, safeguarding them from destruction or what was deemed by the preservationists to be inappropriate development.

The Old South Meeting House, an impressive red-brick Georgian style building, was constructed in 1729 on the site of an earlier meeting house where Benjamin Franklin had been baptized (1706). Officially, it functioned as a Congregational Church, but it also acted as a public meeting house, and in the years leading up to the American Revolution it was the scene of many historically important political meetings including those which resulted in the Boston Tea Party of 1773. Here also were held the anniversary commemorations of the Boston Massacre. Thus the building came to acquire a series of historical associations in no way connected to its official function as a Congregational Church. As the city grew and the congregation moved away, it became apparent that there

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<sup>27</sup>Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 62.

was a need for a new church in a more favourable location. This was built, and it was dedicated in 1875, leaving the Old South Meeting House unused. A "vigorous minority of the congregation devoted to the historical associations of the old meeting house"<sup>28</sup> struggled for four years to save the building, but apparently apathy reigned and the building seemed to be doomed to demolition. At first, the attitudes of Bostonians towards their historic buildings seemed to have changed little since the "Old Brick" was sold for demolition back in 1808. But at the last hour a mass meeting was called, emotions flowed and Bostonians for the first time became united in a desire to preserve the past. The theme was taken "that Bostonians must not permit the destruction of the one thing that set their city apart from all other American cities; the last visible reminders of a proud past"<sup>29</sup> and that the patriotic and symbolic values of the old meeting house were of overwhelming importance to the American people:-

...What is a statue of Cicero compared to standing where your voice echoes from pillar and wall that actually heard his philippics! How much better than a picture of John Brown is the sight of that Blue Ridge which filled his eye, when, riding to the scaffold, he said calmly to his jailer, 'This is a beautiful country: I never noticed it before.' Destroy every portrait of Luther, if you must, but save that terrible chamber where he fought with the Devil, and translated the Bible. Scholars have grown old and blind striving to put their hands on the very spot where bold men spoke or brave men died: shall we tear

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<sup>28</sup> Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory," p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 105.

in pieces the roof that actually trembled to the words which made us a nation? It is impossible not to believe, if the spirits above us are permitted to know what passes in this terrestrial sphere, that Adams and Warren and Otis are today bending over us, asking that the scene of their immortal labors shall not be desecrated or blotted from the sight of men.<sup>30</sup>

Emotionalism and patriotism won the day; a committee was formed on the spot to obtain contributions, thousands of dollars flowed in from countless people, a mortgage was obtained and lectures, balls and fairs were held in order to pay it off. In all, \$400,000 was raised and thus the Old South Meeting House was "preserved as the first instance in Boston where respect for the historical heritage of the city triumphed over considerations of profit, expediency, laziness and vulgar convenience... With the success of this effort, historic preservation moved into its urban phase".<sup>31</sup> And it was fitting that North American urban preservation should begin in Boston for this was one of the earliest important cities in North America, and the scene of many major events in the development of the American Republic.

The implications of the preservation of the Old South Meeting House were far-reaching. The publicity that it gained and the interest that it inspired led the city of Boston to undertake the much required restoration of the nearby Old State House in 1881. This was another building with

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<sup>30</sup> Directors of the Old South Work, The Old South Meeting House, No. 183 of Old South Leaflets (Boston: Directors of Old South Work, n.d.), p. 7. Quoted in Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 104.

<sup>31</sup> Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 39.

strong Revolutionary associations, as was the Faneuil Hall, which was restored by the City in 1898. This emphasis on preserving those buildings associated with "great men" or "great events" gained momentum not only in Boston, but throughout the Eastern and Southern States, and it was particularly important in the early years of the 20th Century. In this period such structures as Paul Revere's house in Boston (Plate 2), Jamestown Island, Washington's headquarters at Morristown and Valley Forge and Newburgh, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Andrew Jackson's "Hermitage", the house in Washington where Abraham Lincoln died, and the "White House of the Confederacy" in Richmond were all preserved. And in almost every case "preservation" involved turning these buildings into museums which were expected to provide inspiration to the visitors. "Many houses were in this period preserved through the efforts of local historical and patriotic societies, almost invariably because of veneration for some distinguished former occupant"<sup>32</sup>, and increasingly preservationists turned their attention to safeguarding "the homes of authors as well as the scenes they described",<sup>33</sup> this being particularly common practice in literary-minded New England. Preservation was at this time undertaken on a very sporadic and local basis by groups of concerned individuals. Government intervention in preservation activities was as yet fairly insignificant, although in 1906 the U.S. Federal Government first became officially involved in preservation with the passing of the

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<sup>32</sup>Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 40.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

Antiquities Act which gave the President the authority to establish historic monuments on Federal property or on property to be occupied by the Federal Government for preservation.

Historic and literary associations were the only justifications for preservation at this time, aesthetic considerations being regarded as "a matter of luxury and indulgence..."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, in this early phase of American preservation, concern was only given to scattered individual historic buildings which were often in rural estates, well away from the rapidly growing cities, and thus the actual areal impact of preservation on the North American urban environment was very small at this time, and Boston and Philadelphia were the only cities in which preservationists scored any really notable successes as regards safeguarding a number of key historical structures.

#### 1910 to 1950

The second phase in the development of the North American preservation movement was marked by a growing awareness of the quality of both rural and urban environments, and by a growing historical awareness. This period was to see the introduction of many ideas new to North American preservation, a widening of the whole approach towards preservation, and a growing interest in the concept of preservation amongst all levels of

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 405-406. The quotation is a reference to the comment of Judge Swayze in Passaic V. Patterson Bill Posting Co., 1905.

government, and amongst numerous organisations and individuals.

An important change of direction in North American preservation philosophy came about in 1910 with the creation of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, founded by William Sumner Appleton. The purpose of the Society was, according to Appleton, "to save for future generations structures of the 17th and 18th Centuries, and the early years of the 19th, which are architecturally beautiful or unique, or have special historical significance. Such buildings once destroyed can never be replaced."<sup>35</sup> Thus Appleton was proposing a move away from the belief that preservation should be undertaken solely for patriotic or associative reasons. Indeed, his motives were more architectural than patriotic, and, furthermore, he believed that worthy buildings should be preserved by any means possible and not necessarily for use as inspirational museums. The New England landscapes and townscapes were changing rapidly in the early years of the 20th Century, largely as a result of increasing population and prosperity. Historic buildings were being demolished or radically altered at an alarming rate, and the patriotically-minded preservation societies were not really getting to grips with the problem in their dabbling with the occasional single house. Appleton warned that,

The situation requires aggressive action by a large and strong society, which shall cover the whole field and act instantly wherever needed to lead in the preservation of noteworthy buildings and historic sites. This is exactly what this society has been formed to do ... It is proposed to preserve the most interesting of these buildings by obtaining control

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<sup>35</sup> Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 40.

of them through gift, purchase or otherwise, and then to restore them, and finally to let them to tenants under wise restrictions, unless legal conditions suggest some other treatment. <sup>36</sup>

From Appleton's statements and ideas, two now-vital preservation concepts emerged: the validity of architectural beauty and uniqueness, and the concept of preserving buildings for continued use rather than as museums. Both of these ideas have had a tremendous impact on the subsequent development of the preservation movement. The society that Appleton began is still in existence, and indeed it has acquired some fifty properties since 1910. "Some of the properties are regularly open to visitors, others are preserved through private occupancy ... but all are safeguarded for the future. Some of the houses were built or occupied by persons of historical or literary significance, but all of them have strong claim to survival on their architectural merits".<sup>37</sup> More important, other societies in other regions of the United States gradually adopted Appleton's ideas; the aesthetic or architectural value of a building has become a major preservation criterion, and the concept of continued use is now widely accepted, thus leading to a more positive approach towards preservation.

So far the preservationists had been concerned solely with the preservation of significant single buildings, rather than with the preservation of whole districts. Even the Society for the Preservation of New

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<sup>36</sup>Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 41.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.



England Antiquities had given little if any attention to the idea of preserving whole districts of buildings or preserving buildings in relationship to each other. A historic meeting house might be saved, but what happened around it mattered little. But the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, which began in 1926, was to change all this. ✓

In the 18th Century Williamsburg was one of the most important settlements in North America. It was the first capital of Virginia, a position it maintained from 1699 to 1780, and it is the seat of the second college to be founded in British North America.<sup>38</sup> But the Commonwealth government moved to Richmond in 1780 and the city fell into decline. Williamsburg had possessed numerous fine examples of American colonial architecture, but over the years many buildings were burnt down, demolished or tastelessly rebuilt, and incongruous new structures were added, although there were enough old buildings in reasonably good condition to remind one of the auspicious past of the community. The Rector of the parish church initiated the idea of restoring the whole town, but the idea would probably have never been realised but for the fact that the Rector, Dr. Goodwin, was able to enlist the support of the multi-millionaire philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller, Junior, who visited Williamsburg in 1926. A year later the enthusiastic Mr. Rockefeller decided to implement Dr. Goodwin's plan of endeavoring "to restore accurately and preserve for all time the most significant portion of an historic and important city

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<sup>38</sup> Namely, the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg. .

of America's colonial period."<sup>39</sup> Reconstruction and restoration of the Colonial-style buildings proceeded rapidly, and some six hundred 19th and 20th Century buildings were torn down or removed from the restoration area. The ultimate objective was to recreate the atmosphere and character of Colonial Williamsburg. Between 1926 and 1969 almost 80 million dollars had been spent on the restoration of more than 80 major structures and 45 lesser ones. The result is a kind of museum piece on a grand scale, and if the number of visitors and the amount of money that it attracts are the main criteria of success or failure, there is no doubt at all that it has been a great success.

Other "mini-Williamsburgs" have appeared all over North America in subsequent years with varying degrees of success. "By recreating a town at the finest period of its history and operating it solely as a museum, the Williamsburg preservationists popularized an approach to preservation that has captured the public imagination."<sup>40</sup> Henry Ford was the first to follow the Williamsburg example by his creation of Greenfield Village, Michigan, in 1929, but far from being the authentic restoration of a pre-existing historic community, it was "a make believe town formed by moving over 100 reconstructed and restored seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings to a site in Dearborn, Michigan."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Dr. Goodwin's quotation appears in Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory", p. 42.

<sup>40</sup>John S. Pyke, Jr., Landmark Preservation (New York: Citizens Union Research Foundation, 1969), p. 8.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

Other notable museum-villages were soon established in such places as Old Salem in North Carolina, Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts and Schoenbrun Village in Ohio, and the concept soon spread to other regions of the United States and Canada. But few if any of the many museum-towns and villages that are now in existence can possibly hope to fully emulate the success story of the pioneer Williamsburg project simply because the latter has an endowment fund of some \$50 million provided by the Rockefellers, and the authenticity of many of these subsequent restoration projects can certainly be questioned and, in some cases, laughed at! But this is not to detract from the importance of Williamsburg itself and the new concepts it brought into being. (What is perhaps most important about Williamsburg is that it brought to the preservation movement the concept of preserving buildings in relation to each other by rescuing and protecting a whole district or even an entire town. This concept of area preservation has had an important impact on the North American City.)

Thus in 1931 Charleston, South Carolina, became the first North American city to pass legislation setting up historic district zoning and creating an historic district ("The Old and Historic District of Charleston"). Five years later, New Orleans passed similar historic area regulations and the Vieux Carré Commission was established, "...in order that the quaint and distinctive character of the Vieux Carré may not be injuriously affected, and so that the value of those buildings housing architectural and historical worth may not be impaired..."<sup>42</sup> (Plate 3). It is significant that

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<sup>42</sup>Quoted in Walter Muir Whitehill, "The Right of Cities to be Beautiful", in With Heritage So Rich, p. 46.



Plate 2: Paul Revere's House, Boston.- This is the oldest surviving building in Boston (built c. 1677), but it was safeguarded and restored in the early 1900's primarily because it was the home of Paul Revere during the American Revolution. The protection of buildings associated with important persons or important historic events was for a long time the main concern of North American preservationists.



Plate 3: The Vieux Carré of New Orleans.- New Orleans was one of the first communities in North America to protect an entire district of historic buildings, and architectural and aesthetic considerations were at the forefront. The Vieux Carré historic district is famous for its decorative iron-lace balconies such as those displayed by the Labranche Building (above).

these zoning ordinances allowed for the continuous active use of these historic areas rather than the creation of a museum or exhibition as was the case in Williamsburg and its successors. The major implication of the introduction of preservation legislation at Charleston and New Orleans was that existing historic and architecturally-significant structures, within the confines of the historic districts, were now to be protected from destruction and impairment. It is interesting to note that the concept of historic district preservation first acquired popularity in the economically-backward but historically-conscious and architecturally-rich South rather than in the more progressive and industrious North.

Little further progress was made with historic district legislation until after the end of World War II, although it must be mentioned that Montreal became the first Canadian city to move in this direction with the passing of an "Historic or Artistic Monuments and Sites Act" in 1941, its objectives being "to preserve sites and monuments, natural, historic and artistic, in their present state or repaired, depending on the owner's consent."<sup>43</sup> (Plate 4). Preservation activity in Canada had so far been very sporadic and concerned with little more than the protection of the oldest structure in a community and the establishment of pioneer days museums, as in Toronto as early as 1879, when the York Pioneer and Historical Society rescued the "Scadding Cabin" (built in 1794).<sup>44</sup> But there had been

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<sup>43</sup>R. E. Hayes, ed., "Montreal?", Proportions 1963 (Montreal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1963), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup>See Nick Mika and Helma Mika, Toronto: Magnificent City (Belleville, Ontario: Mika Silk Screening Ltd., 1967).

one important and distinctively Canadian development; the establishment of a Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada which first met in Ottawa in 1919. This Board was composed of representatives from all the Canadian provinces, its purpose being to designate "the persons, places and events significant to our national history...", the ultimate objective being the establishment of historic sites and parks protected for the nation.<sup>45</sup> But in general Canadian preservation activities lagged behind those of its neighbour to the south. ✓

A major development in the history of the North American preservation movement occurred in 1933 with the initiation of the Historic American Building Survey ("HABS") by the U. S. National Parks Service in collaboration with the Library of Congress and the American Institute of Architects. HABS originated during the Depression years so that unemployed architects throughout the nation could be gainfully employed. In November of 1933 a project was proposed for employing a thousand men for six months in order to prepare a collection of measured drawings and photographs of historic buildings throughout the United States. Work began in 1934 and the returns for the first six months were so successful that HABS continued its recording of data until 1941 and the coming of the war. By then some 6,389 noteworthy structures had been recorded in the first ever attempt to record the architecture of the United States on a national scale, although lack of travel funds for architects and

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<sup>45</sup>"Behind the Scenes," National Historic Park News, III (July, 1970), p. 5.

regional variations in the numbers of unemployed architects meant that attention was very unevenly spread across the nation.

In 1935 Congress passed the Historic Sites Bill, which declared that "it is a national policy to preserve historic sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance for the benefit and inspiration of the people of the United States."<sup>46</sup> The passing of this Bill was indicative of the increasing interest of the Federal Government (under the Roosevelt administration) in historic preservation and indeed in all aspects of resource conservation. This policy was

to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service, which was empowered to collect historical data, survey historical buildings and sites, make investigations, accept gifts and bequests, contract with individuals or local governments to protect important property, restore property of national significance, erect commemorative tablets, manage archaeological property, and organise a corps to further all these purposes. <sup>47</sup>

This was indeed a wide-ranging policy, but in actual fact, although the National Parks Service successfully guided the HABS programme from 1935 until 1941, the preservation of historic and architectural landmarks was very much subordinate to the Park Service's primary interest, the National Park system.

Little drastic progress was made in preservation practice at the Federal level or at any other level during the war years and in the

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<sup>46</sup>Quoted in Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 409.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 409-410.

years immediately following. Few communities seemed to be willing to experiment with historic and architectural preservation at this time, and the federal governments of both the United States and Canada were too involved elsewhere to provide much direction. After the important innovations of the 1930's, this war-time lull in a sense brought to a close what might be regarded as the second phase in the development of the North American preservation movement, but one major event did take place in the late 1940's. With the coming of peace, the need in the United States for a national organisation devoted entirely to historic and architectural preservation had become apparent, and consequently in 1949 the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation was established under a Congressional Charter.

The National Trust has, according to its Charter,

a special responsibility to encourage public participation in preservation throughout the nation; to assist, through its activities and services, the forward impetus of the entire preservation movement; and to accept and maintain historic properties significant in American history and culture, and through this means and otherwise to encourage high preservation and restoration standards.<sup>48</sup>

It is a private organisation but it works in close liaison with the Federal Government; its office is in Washington, D.C., and the Secretary of the Interior, the Attorney-General and the Director of the National Gallery are all on its board of trustees. It was inspired by the success

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<sup>48</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, A Report on Principles and Guidelines for Historic Preservation in the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1964), p. 8.



of Britain's National Trusts,<sup>49</sup> and hence there are close similarities. Its main function has rapidly become that of a headquarters and information centre for the entire United States preservation movement. Because it is a private organisation, it has had little in the way of funds to provide actual financial aid for preservation projects, and hence its activities in the acquisition and maintenance of buildings have been somewhat limited. But the information and literature on techniques and methods that it has supplied to interested individuals, to societies and to government departments have been invaluable. Its publications, seminars and conferences have been particularly important in promoting the concept of historic and architectural preservation in the United States, and, to some extent, in Canada.

Thus this second phase in the history of the North American preservation movement was extremely important in terms of its new ideas, and these led to a widening of the whole approach towards preservation, and to a steady increase in the popularity of the preservation concept. In addition to the application of new ideas, more traditional forms of preservation work continued at an accelerating pace; oldest surviving buildings and structures with patriotic associations were safeguarded and restored with growing regularity in communities throughout North America, and this type of preservation activity, which was usually carried out quietly by local historical societies and other similar organisations, must have accounted for most of the many structures that were preserved

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<sup>49</sup> i.e. The National Trust for England and Wales, and the separate National Trust for Scotland.

during this second phase. The impact of preservation philosophy and practice in the cities of North America increased during this second phase, although urban preservationists were in most cases still doing little more than dabbling with widely-scattered individual buildings rather than dealing with whole areas, in spite of the examples of Williamsburg, Charleston and New Orleans. Increased pressures within the cities led to a growing concern for the preservation of outstanding individual historic buildings, but the overall impact of preservation in urban centres was in general still very small. Nonetheless, preservation for architectural or aesthetic reasons, continuous use of preserved structures, the preservation of entire districts, villages and even towns, historic district zoning, a national survey of architecturally and historically significant buildings, the creation of a U.S. national organisation devoted in entirety to the preservation movement, and the establishment of a Canadian Historic Sites and Monuments Board, were all exciting new developments that heralded the way for the "preservation boom" which began in the early 1950's and has continued to the present day.

#### 1950 to the Present Day

The last two decades have witnessed a tremendous growth in the popularity and impact of historic and architectural preservation both in the United States and Canada. This growth has expressed itself in many forms, although to a large extent it has developed along the guidelines established before 1950. So great has been the growth of preservation

activity in recent years that it is difficult as yet to ascertain the dominant trends and full implications of this growth.

Perhaps most outstanding from the point of view of the geographer, concerned as he is with man and his use of space, has been the great increase in the popularity of historic area preservation. Preservationists are no longer content with dabbling with individual structures when there are sizeable districts within many communities, containing large numbers of buildings of historic and architectural interest, which are falling into decay and ruin and being completely obliterated in the names of progress and profit. One of the effects of this growing popularity of historic area preservation has been a large increase since 1950 in the number of historic villages and pioneer-day villages. Some of these are authentic restorations of existing communities, whilst others are purely artificial reconstructions of idealised Western frontier towns, etc. But invariably these villages are mere museums and they cannot be regarded as living communities. Most of them have been developed in rural areas, often along inter-state highways, although some have developed in suburban fringes. More important from the perspective of the urbanist has been the rapid increase in the popularity of historic area preservation within North American cities.

Williamsburg, Charleston and New Orleans were the outstanding early pioneers of area preservation, yet even by 1950 only six United States communities had historic district ordinances, and all six were in the Southern States. In the past twenty years this number has risen rapidly;

in 1959 twenty-one U.S. communities had historic district legislation, by 1963 the figure had reached 68, and by 1970 the number had grown to over a hundred.<sup>50</sup> Cities of all sizes and in all regions of the United States are today protecting their historic districts by means of preservation legislation; this is true even in relatively young communities in such regions as California, the Pacific North West and the Mid-West, and even in the gigantic metropolitan centres such as New York City and Chicago, where morphological changes take place most rapidly of all and where it would be expected that the voice of the preservationist would have little impact in a world of speculative development and economic progress. In Canada, too, historic area preservation has gained considerable popularity in the last few years; a considerably number of cities across the country are experimenting with it, and historic district legislation has been introduced to protect historic districts in a few of the older cities.

Historic district legislation, in almost all cases, imposes architectural controls over the alteration, demolition and construction of structures within the designated historic area "on the premise that community appearance is an important dimension of the public welfare and that there are educational, cultural and aesthetic benefits to be derived by the community from the preservation of such areas."<sup>51</sup> But these

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<sup>50</sup> See Robert L. Montague, III, and Tony P. Wrenn, Planning for Preservation (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, November, 1964), pp. 18-19.

<sup>51</sup> Miner, Landmark Preservation, p. 6.

zoning ordinances do not in most cases attempt to control the usage or ownership of a building, nor do they adhere to the old belief that the preservation of a building necessitates its conversion into a museum. These historic districts are usually to be found in the central areas of cities; if they were to be converted into sterile museum pieces the economic and social ramifications would be disastrous. It is rapidly becoming obvious that, through the enactment and enforcement of historic district legislation, historic areas can retain their characteristic appearance and distinctive atmosphere whilst remaining socially and economically active. The economic argument has traditionally been probably the strongest factor working against the survival of an historic building, but increasingly these days the economic argument is being used in favour of preserving historic and architecturally-distinctive elements of the urban morphology.

The commercial value of historic districts, in particular their ability to generate tourist trade, has been increasingly realised in the past two decades. "The popularity of these districts does not stem wholly from a cultural-sentimental interest, but also from this hard-headed commercial interest"<sup>52</sup>, and "...throughout the country, cities and Chambers of Commerce are realising not only that our cities could be more attractive but that in fact bad esthetics means bad business."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 421.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 405.

According to preservationist Jacob Morrison, "The new blend of the dollar sign with the marks of antiquity has contributed much to the maintenance of historic landmarks, buildings and sites".<sup>54</sup>

This new union of history, aesthetics and economics has led to a novel and peculiarly North American type of historic area preservation; it might more appropriately be described as historic building development, the emphasis being on the word "development", or as "adaptive historic preservation" as it is called by James Biddle, president of the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation.<sup>55</sup> This new type of preservation development is far removed from the traditional negative-protective-museum-oriented type of preservation activity: in a number of cities private developers have set about renovating relicts of the architectural heritage, adapting them to modern uses and requirements, and integrating them into tastefully designed pedestrian-oriented development projects (see Plate 5). The historic relicts are stripped down, cleaned up, painted up to the point that they are often unrecognisable as their former selves, architectural details are carefully and tastefully highlighted, and the interiors are often totally rebuilt. These historic relicts, renewed to the point that there is usually little more than the shell of the original building left standing, eventually become the living foci of these historic

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 421.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Von Eckardt, "Saving Our Landmarks," p. 52.



Plate 4: Old Montreal.- Rue St. Paul in Montreal's Old Town showing the facade and tower of the Bonsecours Market. In the background is the clocktower of the Bonsecours Chapel, which is the oldest church in Montreal (built in 1772). Montreal was one of the first Canadian cities to introduce historic district legislation.



Plate 5: The Jackson Square district of San Francisco.- This was one of the few areas of San Francisco to survive the 1906 earthquake and fire, and hence it comprises one of the greatest concentrations of early San Francisco architecture. The area went through a long decline, but was rediscovered and restored in the 1950's, providing one of the first instances of historic district preservation activity in a young North American city.

building developments; such developments have so far proved to be both culturally and economically successful. Two of the earliest, best known and most profitable examples of this type of preservation development are San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square and Cannery. Ghirardelli Square is a multi-level pedestrian shopping and cultural precinct built around a renovated old chocolate factory, while the Cannery is a converted old warehouse, developed in much the same way.

The success of these two preservation developments in San Francisco has encouraged similar developments in the past two or three years in such cities as Denver (Lorimer Square), Toronto (Yorkville), New York City (Manhattan's South Street Seaport) and Vancouver (Gastown), and it has had the effect of making planners and developers think twice before eliminating further relicts of our architectural heritage. Wolf Von Eckardt argues that,

It seems that developers who recklessly tear down the historic buildings and squares that give our cities a sense of place, ambience and historic continuity are missing the boat... If the idea of historic preservation and renewal catches on...the past will benefit the present not just with sentimental abstractions but with practical hard cash.<sup>56</sup>

These preservation developments are usually much more restricted in size than are the legislation-protected historic districts, and as such they provide probably the greatest potential for the majority of communities that cannot boast outstanding large-scale historic districts of the scale

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Von Eckardt, "Saving Our Landmarks," pp. 52-53.



and magnitude of the Vieux Carre or of Boston's Beacon Hill. The emphasis in most of these schemes is more on development rather than on safeguarding, although the architectural and historical qualities of the nucleus buildings are key factors in determining the characters of such areas, and are an indispensable integral part of the entire development.

✓ Historic preservation development is a distinctively North American concept in that it is a response to, firstly, the current cultural environment, which stresses aesthetics, economics, urban revitalisation, and increased awareness of the past (but hardly in that order!), and to, secondly, the inter-related architectural-morphological environment which displays little in the way of internationally recognised outstanding architectural gems, but much in the way of run-down yet fairly attractive nineteenth-century structures waiting to be jazzed up. Such schemes would almost certainly raise howls of disapproval from the early preservationists who believed that historic monuments should be set aside as museums and as shrines to the past and its heroes, many of them following the idea of the Englishmen Ruskin and Morris that ancient architecture should be cherished and protected, but under no circumstances should it be restored -- let alone developed into shopping plazas!

Proponents of renewal schemes have tended in the past to have little sympathy for the feelings of preservationists, but here too a significant change of attitude has come about since the mid-1950's. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has shown considerable interest in trying to make preservation and urban renewal compatible. Indeed, the

assistance of this government department has rapidly become one of the most important factors in American preservation; by 1966 over 100 communities had used the programmes and financial aid of the Department to halt the destruction of historic places. Philadelphia was a pioneer in the application of urban renewal law and financing to preservation activity (commencing in 1957), and the resulting preservation and socio-economic revitalisation of the Society Hill district is regarded by many as one of the most notable achievements of North American preservationists. Other outstanding outcomes of this combination of Urban Renewal and preservation are the 1959 demonstration study of the College Hill historic area of Providence, Rhode Island, and the 1969 Vieux Carré Historic District Demonstration Study (New Orleans); these two reports, both financed by Urban Renewal demonstration grants, are probably the most influential preservation-planning surveys to be produced so far.<sup>57</sup> The successes of Philadelphia, New Orleans and Providence, in combining historic and

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<sup>57</sup> See College Hill: A Demonstration Grant Study of Historic Area Renewal (Providence, R.I.: Providence City Planning Commission, 1959), and Plan and Program for the Preservation of the Vieux Carré (New Orleans: Bureau of Governmental Research, December 1968). - The latter work is a summary of the Vieux Carré Historic District Demonstration Study based on the following technical supplements:- Technical Report on the Environmental Survey; Legal and Administrative Report; Economic and Social Study; The Vieux Carré, New Orleans - Its Plan, Its Growth, Its Architecture; New Orleans Central Business District Traffic Study; Summary Report - Evaluation of the Effects of the Proposed Riverfront Expressway; and Technical Report on the Effects of the Proposed Riverfront Expressway.

architectural preservation with urban renewal, are being repeated in communities as far apart as San Francisco, Mobile, Chicago and Plymouth (Mass.). In Canada, urban renewal law techniques and financing are also being used to preserve historic districts, as in Victoria's Bastion Square.

The involvement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in preservation activities is but one aspect of this growing governmental participation in preservation that the last two decades have witnessed. At the local level, as we have seen, over a hundred municipal governments have in recent years enacted preservation legislation in order to protect historic districts. Municipal governments have introduced other legal devices, such as tax incentives, architectural control laws, easements and aesthetic zoning in order to promote preservation activity, though the application of these has not been nearly so widespread as that of the historic district ordinance. At the State level, every single U.S. State has enacted some type of preservation law, and by 1965 some fourteen states had adopted legislation which specifically authorized the creation of architectural control areas or historic districts; but activity has not been restricted to the introduction of legislation, as is demonstrated by the numerous state historical parks and museums that have been established in recent years.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, all of the Canadian Provincial Governments have enacted Historic Monuments legislation; this has facilitated the reconstruction and preservation of nationally and regionally

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<sup>58</sup>Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 11.

important historical sites and districts (e.g. Upper Canada Village and Barkerville).

The past ten years have seen considerable attention given to the issue of historic preservation by the U.S. Federal Government, resulting in such developments as the passing by Congress of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This initiated preservation programmes leading to the development of an expanded National Register to record all "districts, sites, buildings and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology and culture",<sup>59</sup> to the creation of a national Advisory Council on historic preservation, and to the authorisation of the granting of Federal funds to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and to a wide range of other preservation activities. Other recently enacted laws (such as the Demonstration Cities Act of 1966) have further expanded the potential role of the U.S. Federal government in preservation activity, but the extent to which this potential will be realised depends largely on the amount of funds that are to be appropriated for preservation purposes. The most productive preservation activity of the Federal government to date is that carried out under the auspices of the U.S. National Parks Service; since its foundation in 1961 it has saved, restored and maintained numerous historic sites throughout the country, but the emphasis has been on historically (patriotically) important sites rather than on

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<sup>59</sup>16 U.S.C. §470 (1966). Quoted in Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 9.

architectural or aesthetic quality. The Presidential Advisory Council on Historic Preservation would appear on paper to have considerable power and this was effectively demonstrated in reality in 1969 by the refusal of the Secretary of Transport, John A. Volpe, to approve Federal financing of the long-contested New Orleans waterfront expressway on the grounds that it would have "seriously impaired the historic quality of New Orleans' famed French Quarter."<sup>60</sup>

Increased involvement in historic and architectural preservation at the Federal government level has not been restricted to the United States. In Canada, interest in the country's historical background and architectural heritage, and concern for national identity, would appear to have increased markedly since the early 1950's, and this is reflected in the growing concern for preservation at all levels of government, including the Federal government. In 1955 the National Historic Sites Service was created by the Federal Government as a unit of the National and Historic Parks Branch of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This Service employs a specialized full-time staff that includes historians, archaeologists and curators, whose function is "to develop, interpret, operate and maintain historic parks and sites",<sup>61</sup> and

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<sup>60</sup>Quoted in George Marcou and Jeremiah O'Leary, "Historic Preservation in New Orleans' French Quarter", Nation's Cities, VII (August, 1969), pp. 8-10.

<sup>61</sup>"Behind the Scenes", National Historic Park News, III (July, 1970), p. 5.

its office is situated in Ottawa. There is a close liaison between the National Historic Sites Service, and the much older, yet still active, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada; the latter is essentially a part-time advisory body, the Service implementing the Board's recommendations wherever feasible. In its 52 years of existence the recommendations of the Board have in fact led to the establishment of more than fifty historic parks and sites, and to the marking (by plaques) of over 600 historic sites across the country; the majority of these historic parks and sites are to be found in the longer settled Eastern parts of Canada, and the emphasis is very definitely on military aspects of Canadian history (especially forts and battle-fields). To date, relatively little attention has been paid to architectural quality, perhaps because of a widespread belief that architectural quality is virtually none-existent in Canada. William Colgate's observation in Canadian Art is worthy of consideration: "Very few of our buildings...can by any stretch of the imagination be considered good architecture, or even architecture at all."<sup>62</sup> However, in the last few years a growing interest in Canada's architectural heritage has emerged, as is demonstrated by the Federal Government's initiation in 1970 of the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, the first attempt to record all buildings of historic and architectural significance in Canada.

It has become increasingly evident that the evaluation and recording

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<sup>62</sup>William G. Colgate, Canadian Art: 1820-1944 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943), pp. 255-256.

of historically and architecturally significant buildings is an essential step in any organised or comprehensive preservation programme. In the past, buildings seem to have been preserved on what really amounted to an accidental or random basis, but today the growing professionalism of the preservation movement demands a more objective and systematic approach. The Canadian National Architectural Inventory is one answer to these demands, and the method of recording significant structures that has been developed for this inventory is regarded by experts as being one of the most sophisticated and advanced ever to be devised. "This is the first comprehensive architectural inventory in the world to be designed for a computerized information retrieval system."<sup>63</sup> "We have finally broken through to a way which can handle and process large chunks of information about our cities and make it available to various levels of government concerned. This represents a major breakthrough for Canada."<sup>64</sup> With the revival of the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1957, through the Mission 66 programme of the U.S. National Park System, and the subsequent creation of a U.S. National Register by the 1966 Historic Preservation Act, both the United States and Canada now have in operation nationwide Federally-directed surveys of historic and architecturally significant structures. The

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<sup>63</sup> Harold D. Kalman, quoted in "Old City Buildings Probed by Survey," Vancouver Sun, June 16, 1970, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Meredith Sykes and James H. Acland, "Survey of Canada's Historic Buildings," in The Canadian Architect, XV (May, 1970), p. 49.

growing awareness of the value of such surveys has been a major theme of the development of preservation since 1950, and it has of course manifested itself at the local level as well as the national. Such surveys have become an integral part of preservation planning programmes in many North American communities.

✓ Thus the past twenty years have witnessed a growing professionalism and a great expansion of governmental participation in North American preservation activity. But this is not to say that the concerned patriotic individuals and local amateur organisations that were the mainstay of preservation in the early years are no longer of importance. On the contrary, they are probably of more importance now than ever in that preservation has come to necessitate a joint participation at all levels. "People are still the most forceful preservers of early buildings, although not always the best qualified. Public bodies frequently have great lapses in appreciation which see the destruction of" (important buildings).<sup>65</sup> The growth of the popularity of preservation has been most widespread in both spatial and numerical senses amongst private individuals and private groups, and in the past twenty years such people have been responsible for the preservation of literally thousands of structures in all parts of North America. Sometimes such preservation activities have been undertaken with public assistance, but more often than not they are entirely independent operations, privately financed and developed. "Notwithstanding

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<sup>65</sup> Peter J. Stokes, "Preservation in Canada," Canadian Antiques Collector, IV (November, 1969), p. 29.



the increased governmental activity in the preservation field, the heart of the landmarks preservation movement is still the initiative of private citizens".<sup>66</sup> But increasingly it becomes apparent that there is a need for a combination of both public and private activity and interests, especially in view of the growing popularity of area or district preservation.<sup>67</sup> What is perhaps of most importance is that the whole base of interest in preservation activity has been greatly widened in the past 20 years. "In the past, only the most zealous architectural historian and Colonial Dame was involved with preservation. Now this group has expanded to include real estate leaders, bankers, planners, ministers, municipal officials, and lay citizens."<sup>68</sup>

However, contrary to this prevailing impression of rapid progress as regards safeguarding the historical and architectural resources of Canada and the United States, it can be argued with considerably validity that the preservation movement is fighting an up-hill battle too late. "For the reminders of the past are being torn down faster than they can be preserved...time may be running out on the preservation movement..."<sup>69</sup> But then the very existence of a preservation movement is but a reaction to the ever growing forces of change and destruction that continually

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<sup>66</sup>Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 14.

<sup>67</sup>See Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 411, for comments on the relative merits of public and private preservation.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 404-409.

threaten the architectural and historical fabrics of our communities; if there were no threats to the lives of historic and architecturally-significant buildings, there would be no need for a conscious preservation movement.

Urban renewal, slum clearance and freeway development projects have all proliferated in the past 20 years, and their impact has been greatest in the older parts of the North American City, where most of the historic structures and districts are to be found. Further threats have been provided by office expansion, and by the proliferation of in-town developments of all kinds occasioned by population expansion and economic growth. Growing awareness of the consequences of this population expansion and of the closely related deterioration of environmental conditions have brought about a greater concern for quality of life, quality of environment and aesthetics. Unprecedented high standards of public education have encouraged a great increase in historical awareness in recent years. It has become increasingly understood that this historical awareness can be transmitted into the preservation of vestiges of the cultural heritage of a country, and, furthermore, that such activity often makes economic sense and also facilitates the maintenance or creation of an aesthetically pleasing environment.

Thus the past twenty years in particular have brought many changes to the North American preservation movement and its activities. With the great expansion of interest and activity, the widening of the concept of preservation itself, the growing professionalism and sophistication of the

movement and its methods, and with the closely-related change from emotional to rational justifications for preservation activity, it becomes very obvious that the contemporary role of preservation within the North American City is very different from the role that preservation played a century ago or, for that matter, even ten years ago.

CHAPTER III  
THE CONTEMPORARY ROLE OF PRESERVATION IN THE  
NORTH AMERICAN CITY

The role of historical and architectural preservation has expanded and changed so much in recent years that separate treatment seems to be not only desirable but also imperative if we are to really comprehend the justifications, practicalities, implications and potentialities of current urban preservation activity.

Contemporary Justifications for Urban Preservation

Nowadays many valid arguments are expressed in favour of the preservation of urban elements. There is, however, no single universally applicable justification for urban preservation; many valid justifications have made themselves apparent in different circumstances and at different times. Often there is a considerable degree of interrelationship and overlapping between these separate justifications, but in some circumstances they may completely contradict each other.

The most frequently expressed argument for urban preservation in North America is that of the need to preserve "the cultural heritage". The underlying assumption is that buildings with historical associations and of architectural interest are a valuable and irreplaceable part of a nation's cultural heritage, and as such they should be retained or preserved. An exemplary quotation is provided by the introduction to the

American Society of Planning Officials' Booklet Planning for Preservation;  
 "...it becomes more evident every day that our country faces a future of  
 historical and cultural sterility unless means can be found to retain  
 these buildings and areas in existing urban complexes which form a valuable  
 part of our cultural heritage."<sup>1</sup> Such features are valuable for both  
 educational and inspirational purposes; according to former Secretary of  
 the Interior Harold Ickes, they "instill a love of the country and main-  
 tain morale."<sup>2</sup>

The scope of preservation has widened so greatly in recent years  
 that according to the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation,

...the movement now seeks to perpetuate our much  
 wider heritage of history and architecture as an  
 irreplaceable part of the living fabric and beauty  
 of our communities ... Preservation of our common  
 cultural heritage is a moral obligation which rests  
 squarely on the shoulders of every citizen. Regard-  
 less of contemporary pressures and distractions,  
 each generation has a profound responsibility to  
 preserve undiminished the historical and artistic  
 heritage it has received from the past, and from  
 new increments, and pass the total heritage on,  
 unimpaired, to the next generation. Wisely con-  
 served, these cumulative evidences of the past  
 constitute a powerful, physical, moral and spiri-  
 tual activating force, making an indispensable  
 contribution to the artistic and cultural life of

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<sup>1</sup>Robert L. Montague, III, and Tony P. Wrenn, Planning for Preser-  
 vation (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, November, 1964),  
 pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, Man-Made  
 America: Chaos or Control? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963),  
 p. 409.

the nation, and to the broader world civilisation of which it is a part.<sup>3</sup>

The main argument for urban preservation that is put forward by all levels of government, and by many voluntary organisations and individuals, is this one of the need to preserve, "our heritage" or "cultural patrimony"<sup>4</sup> for educational and for spiritual purposes. Historic preservation can be justified by the argument that continuity with the past, made possible by the preservation of man-made urban elements, enables both present and future generations to gain a greater understanding of both the past and the present, and this understanding and awareness provides us with ideas and inspirations for the future. Urban preservation brings about a sense of historical continuity, "which is becoming more and more valuable in an age in which so much of the environment is contemporary, and indeed often temporary, in character."<sup>5</sup>

The growing concern for the aesthetic quality of the North American landscape is something that has already been commented on. In what is commonly regarded as an age of mediocrity of design and of ever increasing

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<sup>3</sup>National Trust for Historic Preservation, A Report on Principles and Guidelines for Historic Preservation in the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October, 1964), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>See Christopher Tunnard, "Preserving the Cultural Patrimony," in Future Environments of North America, ed. by F. Fraser Darling and John P. Milton (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1966), pp. 552-567.

<sup>5</sup>George S. Burrows, Chichester: A Study in Conservation (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1968), p. 1.

"subtopian" sprawl throughout the length and breadth of North America,<sup>6</sup> it can be argued that those elements that possess aesthetic quality certainly warrant preservation. Perhaps only a staunch conservationist would agree with the English humorist Osbert Lancaster that "it was 99 to 1 that anything going up was markedly inferior to anything coming down"<sup>7</sup>, but only too often well designed and still functioning buildings and districts are torn down to be replaced by mediocrity and worse. Sociological, psychological and medical research has made it increasingly evident that the design of our buildings and cities does have a marked bearing on mental health,<sup>8</sup> social attitudes and life styles.<sup>9</sup> Aesthetic considerations have gained a legal foothold since a 1954 United States Supreme

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<sup>6</sup>See Frederick Gutheim, "Urban Space and Urban Design," in Cities and Space: The Future Use of Urban Land, ed. by Lowdon Wingo, Jr. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963), pp. 116-117.

<sup>7</sup>Osbert Lancaster, "Some Thoughts on Preservation", in Historic Preservation Today: Essays Presented to the Seminar on Preservation and Restoration, Williamsburg, Virginia, September 1963 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), p. 188.

<sup>8</sup>For example, see Humphrey Osmond's article, "Some Psychiatric Aspects of Design", in Who Designs America?, ed. by Laurence B. Holland (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), p. 111.

<sup>9</sup>See Christopher Alexander, "The City as a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact," in Environment for Man: The Next Fifty Years, ed. by William R. Ewald, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 60-102, and S. M. Farber, "Quality of Living: Stress and Creativity," in Future Environments of North America, ed. by F. Fraser Darling and John P. Milton, pp. 342-353.

Court Decision (Berman versus Parker)<sup>10</sup> ruled that a city has as much right to be beautiful as it has to be safe and clean. But as yet little heed has been given to these findings. As Tunnard and Pushkarev state,

...the fact that aesthetic factors have been found by medical science to be vital to our psychological health and have been declared by the courts to be a proper component of general welfare does not mean that the aesthetic dimension has been exhausted. The necessity for considering the aesthetic side of our lives becomes clear when we realise how little we have concerned ourselves with beauty and order in our physical surroundings, despite the findings of the public health profession and the justifications of the jurists.<sup>11</sup>

It is obviously in our own interest to have well-designed cities, and where good design already exists we should be reluctant to allow it to disappear. This is where preservation activity seems to be particularly desirable. In our increasingly dehumanised, automobile-oriented cities, often the only areas built on a human scale, where the pedestrian need not feel intimidated, are old areas.<sup>12</sup> Such areas often possess qualities that defy measurement ... intimacy, intricacy, charm and beauty. Preservation can facilitate the regeneration of such areas, or more important, can safeguard them from total destruction.

Another important and closely related justification for preservation activity is that it can help maintain and indeed generate a high degree

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<sup>10</sup>Berman V. Parker, 348 U.S. 26, 99, L. Ed. 27, 75 5 Ct. 98.

<sup>11</sup>Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 406.

<sup>12</sup>See Frederick Gibberd, Town Design (London: The Architectural Press, 1953), Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Random House, 1961); and Bernard Rudofsky, Streets for People: A Primer for Americans (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).



of variety and diversity within an urban landscape. A good and varied townscape would seem to be an important factor in the overall attractiveness and success of a city. This is not to suggest that a city should be a complete hotch-potch of architectural styles, but rather a pattern of districts each with its own distinctive character. The U.S. Urban Renewal Administration particularly stresses the importance of character in selecting areas for preservation:-

Character is a loose-knit term used...to describe the general feeling an area conveys of being a pleasant or undesirable place to live. It is not linked to general rules on physical factors such as age of structures, the width of streets, and the number of people per acre. It is the total effect of appearance and atmosphere. It may be attributable to:- (a) Pleasant openness or well organised closeness; (b) enough variety in building placement and types to lend interest; (c) architectural design of good proportion and line. [This kind of character and charm often mellows with age. If you find it, capitalize on it. This quality has been an essential ingredient in case after case, when, against heavy odds, an older area has retained the vitality through the years and has been able to make a successful comeback.]<sup>13</sup>

The influential 1969 Vieux Carré Historic District Demonstration Study uses the term "tout ensemble" to describe such character; "this special character of the whole place, the sum total effect - buildings plus environment - comprises the tout ensemble."<sup>14</sup>

Character defies measurement and adequate definition, and it does

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<sup>13</sup>Selecting Areas for Conservation: Urban Renewal Administration Technical Guide Number 3 (Washington D.C.: Housing and Home Finance Agency, Urban Renewal Administration, 1963).

<sup>14</sup>George Marcou and Jeremiah O'Leary, "Historic Preservation in New Orleans' French Quarter," Nation's Cities, VII (August, 1969), pp. 8-10.

not necessarily coincide with districts of buildings of historic or architectural significance. It is an abstract quality that is, though, often closely related to the physical structure of a district or community. Where historic districts of distinctive character exist, it is frequently argued that their existence should be safeguarded. One thinks particularly of the Chinatowns of the larger North American cities, but almost all cities possess a number of interesting and distinctive districts marked by distinctive architectural features.<sup>15</sup>

It is not merely the larger historic districts that provide a city with its character.

Identity in the city is only partly a question of scale. A good big monument is splendid, but much of the pleasures of cities comes from small scale invention and complexity: a doorway, a bay window, a spire, an element suddenly seen and exploited in the content of a street. These are fragments, the result of intelligent intervention or forethought, that provides the markers by which one remembers and creates a mental structure of a city. More than the height or size of the glass fronted office block, it is those fragments at street level, or on a skyline, that remain memorable. It is in just these parts that modern building is so helpless and where buildings of an older tradition are so strong ... It is these elements which can be seized upon to bolster both a community and an individual identity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Edmund N. Bacon, The Design of Cities (New York: Viking Press, 1967); Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities; Christopher Tunnard and Henry Hope Reed, American Skyline (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956); and Roy Worskett, The Character of Towns: An Approach to Conservation (London: Architectural Press, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> Theo Crosby, The Necessary Monument (London: Studio Vista, 1970), p. 107.

The need for the retention of both small-scale fragments and large-scale districts has become very apparent.

The presence of historic buildings and districts undoubtedly helps to give a city a distinctiveness or a unique character. Thus Santa Fe is remembered for its Spanish-type architecture, New Orleans for its ornate balconies, wrought iron and French Quarter, and Boston for its historic monuments and districts.<sup>17</sup> For reasons of prestige and in order to establish or retain an identity, most of the larger North American cities seem to be striving to develop existing features or to create new features, that provide them with something different to anywhere else. This is reflected not only in the present day vogue for urban preservation, but also in the recent craze for building tall towers and for creating miniaturized versions of Disneyland.<sup>18</sup> (Of course, such developments are also motivated by economic factors!). Historic and architectural preservation facilitates the retention of distinctive elements which are often important to a city's prestige and identity in that they provide a "sense of place, of history, of locality which helps build civic spirit, interest and pride..."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Anselm L. Strauss, Images of the American City (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), for further discussion of popular images of the American City.

<sup>18</sup> The building of the Gateway Arch (Jefferson Memorial) in St. Louis provides an interesting example, as do the "revolving-restaurant-towers" of Seattle, Calgary, San Antonio and elsewhere.

<sup>19</sup> "Old Montreal: The Story of Its Revival", Canadian Realtor, April, 1967, p. 19.

Another strong justification for preserving historic structures is that they provide orientation within the urban fabric and make the city more "imageable". Kevin Lynch, in his Image of the City discusses this concept of imageability and demonstrates the role of landmarks in creating or maintaining an imageable environment:-

A highly imageable (apparent, legible or visible) city...would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation. The sensuous grasp upon such surroundings would not merely be simplified, but also extended and deepened. Such a city would be one that could be apprehended over time as a pattern of high continuity with many distinctive parts clearly interconnected. The perceptive and familiar observer could absorb new sensory impacts without disruption of his basic image, and each new impact would touch upon many previous elements. He would be highly aware of his environment.<sup>20</sup>

Lynch considers landmarks to be one of the five major elements of the city image and suggests that "they are frequently used clues of identity and even of structure."<sup>21</sup> When a landmark is also a structure of historical and/or architectural significance, there is a very strong case for protective measures. Lynch states that, "Historical associations, or other meanings, are powerful reinforcements, as they are for Faneuil Hall or the State House in Boston. Once a history, a sign or a meaning attaches to an object, its value as a landmark rises."<sup>22</sup> The demolition and

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<sup>20</sup>Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

obliteration of such landmarks should obviously not be taken lightly.

Arguments for preservation action on aesthetic and/or historic grounds alone are unlikely to have much impact on profit-minded merchants and property owners, but the realisation that the presence of historic structures attracts a large tourist traffic provides a positive incentive for preserving historic structures.

It is often necessary to persuade towns-people and merchants that restoration is profitable economically - to prove with figures that legislative safeguards will mean dollars and cents. It is generally accepted that not all will benefit from restoration, while an influx of industry will benefit everyone...It may be necessary, therefore, to diminish the historic and aesthetic value of preservation and treat it as a practical business venture.<sup>23</sup>

The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that if a community can attract an average of 24 tourists a day throughout the year, it is the economic equivalent of the acquiring of a new industry with an annual payroll of \$100,000.<sup>24</sup>

Many areas have already assessed the value of their historical architecture and found that it really does equal the impact of industry as a benefit to the community economy. In St. Augustine, Florida, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, tourism brings in more than \$10 million yearly, while New Orleans

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<sup>23</sup>Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>See U.S. Department of Commerce, Your Community Can Benefit from the Tourist Business (Washington D.C.: Office of Area Development, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1957).

sets the value of income from its historical architecture at \$150,000,000 yearly.<sup>25</sup>

The potential impact of preservation on tourism is probably best illustrated by the example of New Orleans. In 1959 the Real Estate Research Corporation of Chicago undertook a study of the Vieux Carré district of New Orleans, and some of their most significant findings were as follows:

The Vieux Carré represents the single largest day-in and day-out concentration of out of town visitors that exists anywhere in the U.S. Almost 80% of the persons interviewed by us on certain streets in the area lived outside New Orleans and most of them were strongly influenced to come to New Orleans primarily by the attraction which the French Quarter presents ...its presence makes New Orleans one of the four most 'popular' convention cities in the U.S.... The Vieux Carré is clearly influential in the location of regional and national offices in New Orleans... It is, therefore, one of the single most important elements in the economic base of the city... the extraordinary strength of the retail, hotel and office markets in the core area of New Orleans is again influenced favourably by the adjacency of the core area to the Vieux Carré.<sup>26</sup>

The 1968 Vieux Carré Historic District Demonstration Study estimated "that about 70% of the 1.8 million persons visiting New Orleans in 1965 were influenced in their decision to come to the city by the existence of the French Quarter. These visitors spent an estimated 170 million

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<sup>25</sup> Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Real Estate Research Corporation of Chicago, Economic Survey of the Central Area of New Orleans (Chicago: Real Estate Research Corporation of Chicago, 1959), pp. 4-5.

dollars in New Orleans during the course of their stay..."<sup>27</sup>

Few cities can hope to fully emulate New Orleans' tremendous success in this field as there are very few North American cities that possess comparable historical and architectural resources. "For most cities historic areas will be desirable adjuncts to other attractions rather than being the main sources of outside interest. Assessment of the economic impact of historic areas as tourist attractions must be realistic, not overly optimistic."<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the existence of historic monuments and districts has had a marked impact on the tourist industry in those communities that are famed for their historical and architectural qualities (e.g. Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, Quebec City and Washington D.C.). With the tremendous growth of the tourist industry, a phenomenon brought about by increasing leisure time, increasing prosperity, increasing mobility and an increasing population, it appears certain that the demand on historic and architectural sites will continue to rise at an accelerating rate for the next few years at least.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Vieux Carré Historic District Demonstration Study: Summary Report - Evaluation of the Effects of the Proposed Riverfront Expressway (New Orleans: Bureau of Government Research, 1968), p. 20.

<sup>28</sup>Ralph W. Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1969), p. 9.

<sup>29</sup>See Projections to the Years 1976 and 2000: Economic Growth, Population, Labor Force and Leisure, and Transportation, Vol. XXIII: National Recreation Survey (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962).

Other economic advantages can be derived from historic preservation, and these are increasingly being acclaimed as justifications for preservation activity. Most notable perhaps is that of a rise in real estate values which has in many instances accompanied the restoration of buildings and districts. Boston's Beacon Hill district provides a classic example.

In 1955 the Beacon Hill Civic Association was able to obtain legislation to establish the Beacon Hill Historic District, covering an area of 22 acres on the edge of Boston's Downtown district. An architectural law was introduced making it illegal to demolish or alter any existing buildings, or to build new structures, without the approval of the Architectural Commission. The effect of the Architectural Control Law has been either to stabilise or to increase real estate values.

Realtors use, 'in the Historical Beacon Hill District' in their advertisements, and explain the law to their customers. In 1955, nine properties sold by one area realtor showed an assessed value of \$221,000 and a sale value of \$233,000, an assessed value of 98% of the sale value. In 1962 the same realtor sold seven properties with an assessed value of \$112,200 for \$321,600, or 35% of the sale price. This seemingly indicates that real estate values have almost tripled, even though assessed values in this section are higher than in any other area of the city.<sup>30</sup>

However, one must take into account the important qualification that these assessment figures "...do not indicate either the amount spent for improve-

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<sup>30</sup>Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, p. 9.



ment of properties or the scarcity of real estate in the area."<sup>31</sup> The problem is in determining to what extent this increase has increased real estate values, and to what extent this increase is a result of other factors which are unrelated to preservation.

In other instances real estate values within historic districts have increased much more markedly. For example, in Santa Barbara's El Pueblo Viejo historic district, real estate values increased 75% to 150%, between 1960 and 1963, and in Richmond, Virginia, assessed values of restored houses rose 136% between 1958 and 1963 as against a 30% rise for unrestored houses.

In many cities around the nation real estate values in rejuvenated old neighbourhoods are soaring. In some places, builders are converting old tenements into luxury apartments houses that have half as many tenants as before but produce twice as much rent. Remodelers, decorators and building supply dealers are finding more customers in old residential areas.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, one must not neglect the increased revenue received by cities from rising real estate taxes, sales taxes and income taxes.

It is apparent that economic justifications for urban preservation have become important. In the past historic preservation was usually regarded as a hinderance to economic progress, but today the economic

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<sup>31</sup>Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup>Donald Moffit, Wall Street Journal, February 6, 1961.

advantages to be gained from preservation activity demand careful attention. The economic arguments for preservation should, however, be considered in association with other arguments rather than in isolation. Many of the benefits to be gained from preservation are intangible in nature and consequently do not permit analysis in terms of their value in dollars alone. When the future of an historic or architecturally-significant element is in jeopardy, some or all of these arguments for preservation merit attention.

#### Problems in Urban Preservation

The justifications for preserving buildings of historic and architectural significance are indeed formidable, and when viewed alone they might lead one to the conclusion that preservation is always the most desirable cause of action where the fate of a building or district is in question. "As an abstract concept, the preservation of landmarks is a desideratum with which no one would quarrel."<sup>33</sup> But in reality many difficulties are encountered in trying to bring about the preservation of historic and architecturally-significant elements.

It has already been demonstrated that preservation can be economically justifiable. Equally, though, it can be argued that preservation is in many instances uneconomical. "...the implementation of preservation principles and programs frequently meets stiff opposition from real estate

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<sup>33</sup>John S. Pyke, Jr., Landmark Preservation (New York: Citizens Union Research Foundation, 1969), p. 6.

interests and landmark owners. Economic considerations often counter-balance a concern with preservation."<sup>34</sup> The realisation that preservation can be economically viable in certain instances does not mean that preservation is invariably economically viable; it appears to be most viable in those communities that possess a rich architectural heritage and which already attract a large tourist traffic, but even in the more historic centres economic problems are far from unknown.

Two main economic problems manifest themselves in preservation activity, these being firstly, the cost of the restoration and maintenance of a structure, and secondly, the economic value of its site.

The individual landmark owner or the local, state or federal governments, or a combination of the private and public sectors, will have to bear a heavy economic burden under any preservation program. Maintenance of a landmark in a manner which preserves its character can be costly. Landmark restoration, which requires special skills and attention even where past care has been good, is an expensive proposition.<sup>35</sup>

Who finances the preservation activity, and how is it going to be financed, are questions that frequently arise. Obviously the cost of restoration and maintenance will vary greatly according to the size, condition and usage of the building in question; large residences and institutional structures are particularly expensive to maintain, and the cost of restoration can be enormous. [An example is provided by the recent conversion of the Jefferson Market Courthouse (New York City) to a public library;

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<sup>34</sup> Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

the total cost was approximately \$1.3 million, "...twice as much as it would have cost to build a new structure with equivalent facilities."<sup>36</sup> It is frequently because of the high cost of maintenance and restoration that buildings are allowed to deteriorate to a condition in which it is more economical to replace them with new structures than it is to restore them; a vicious circle perpetuates itself. And frequently the high cost of preservation encourages the property owner to take the only alternative course of action, i.e. demolition and subsequent rebuilding.

The cost of preservation is obviously very closely related to the second economic problem, the market value of the site of an historic structure or architectural masterpiece. Threats to the survival of a building occur when there is great demand for its site, as is frequently the case in the commercial centres of North American cities. Too much demand may initially bring about alterations and modifications of historic buildings so as to enable them to accommodate new functions; this type of development may well destroy the historic character of the buildings in question. Too much demand and intensive economic activity ultimately results in the demolition of existing structures (especially if they are old and technologically obsolete) and their subsequent replacement by newer buildings which exploit the site potential more effectively.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup>See Hadley J. Buck, "Economic Pressures and the Role of Planning," The Architects' Journal, XVIII (January, 1967), p. 167.

We cannot escape from the simple economic fact that the higher the site value, the greater is the need for the building on the site to be of maximum efficiency. This must result in rebuilding, and alteration of buildings which is a potential threat to their historic character.<sup>38</sup>

The property owner generally assumes that he has the right to develop his property in the way in which he pleases, and any attempts by government to restrict development of prime urban sites is obviously going to meet opposition.

Any effort to preserve a landmark, short of outright purchase from the owner, will involve to some extent an infringement of the owner's right to use the property as he sees fit. For example, the owner of a New York City brownstone may have to forego an opportunity to put his property to a more profitable use by replacing it with a high-rent apartment building. Adjusting the public's interest in preservation to the landmark owner's property interests constitutes one of the most delicate and critical problems in the preservation field.<sup>39</sup>

At the other end of the scale there is an equally significant problem caused by insufficient demand for historic buildings and their sites, the result of which is usually decay and neglect. Insufficient demand may arise because of the location of the building in an area of low site values (for example, in a remote rural area) or because the building itself does not meet a contemporary need.

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<sup>38</sup>Hadley J. Buck, "Economic Pressures and the Role of Planning," p. 170.

<sup>39</sup>Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 6.

The adaptability of historic structures is a key factor in determining their survival potential. ✓

How does the owner keep alive a building for which he has no further use, and in which he cannot interest any other occupant? A building is not an inert object of fine art to be hung on an empty wall, or placed on a pedestal. A building needs care, maintenance, use. Without these it rots. And all the invocations to imagination, the pleas that someone else think of a 'creative' use for a landmark, echo emptily if the building is not adaptable to contemporary use.<sup>40</sup>

Buildings created for a specific technological use are particularly prone to obsolescence, and in many cases it is impossible to find new uses for them without completely rebuilding them. The case of the old Pennsylvania Station in New York City makes an interesting example:

Whether or not one admired its style..., it was one of the city's most impressive structures. But what does one do with an impressive railroad station which has ceased to be of value as a railroad station? In a dying city one boards it up, and watches it become ruins; ultimately shepherds sit on its eroded columns and goats graze between the tracks. In a living city one first prostitutes it into a more efficient machine for selling commuter and race track tickets, and then into an architectural billboard, hanging signs, kiosks and booths from its Roman vaults. Finally, the day is reached when someone decides it is worth more as land than as structure, and down it comes to be replaced by an office building or a sports arena, or both.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Roger Starr, Urban Choices: The City and Its Critics (New York: Coward McCann, 1966), p. 145.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

In some cases historic buildings can be preserved through use as period museums, but the number of museums that any community can support is obviously very limited. Museum use is usually considered to be appropriate

...if there are one or two buildings of exceptional architectural merit and/or historic associations. No community, however, can afford to turn too many of its old buildings into museums. This would take considerable property off the tax rolls and create a superfluous number of competing facilities, none of which could hold its own. A period museum is essentially a passive use; the building is viewed as a monument, a landmark, or an abstract art object. Its appearance is frozen at a certain stage of development, and its potential for more productive use is withdrawn.<sup>42</sup>

In the context of the North American city, it would seem to be both undesirable and economically impossible to preserve more than a few outstanding buildings as museums. In any case, historic buildings do not necessarily make good museums; from the point of view of displaying artifacts a new building specifically designed for that purpose is probably much more effective and functional.

Some structures lend themselves readily to adaptive uses, whilst with others it is much more difficult to find new uses, and if they are located in high-valued sites their survival is very doubtful. It is however possible to substantially alter the interior of a building, so as to increase its adaptability, whilst retaining the exterior appearance.

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<sup>42</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 12.

"The public interest in preservation relates, except in the case of the occasional noteworthy museum, to the public views of the building and its setting."<sup>43</sup> Thus a historic character can be retained on the outside whilst inside office-workers and shopkeepers can enjoy a pleasant and efficient contemporary working environment; but the problem of cost emerges once more.

A problem of a somewhat different nature is that of how to approach the restoration of an historic or architecturally-significant structure. One of the main criticisms of North American preservation efforts is that restoration of historic districts and buildings has often resulted in an unrealistic and unauthentic environment. Restoration often "...produces the curious result that the village or building is recreated as it never was. Restored Williamsburg is marked by paved automobile roads, endless signs and plaques, a glut of over elaborate furniture and the Williamsburg Inn, created out of whole cloth to service the tourist trade."<sup>44</sup> The resulting form has been described as "...a dream image of an immutable past."<sup>45</sup> According to geographer David Lowenthal, Americans "...wish to preserve, and if necessary, to manufacture, an idealized Historyland as

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<sup>43</sup> Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Pyke, Landmark Preservation, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Muir Whitehill, "Promoted to Glory: The Origin of Preservation in the United States" in With Heritage So Rich, Special Committee on Historic Preservation, United States Conference of Mayors (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 44.



a sanctuary from the awful present...The preferred past is history expurgated and sanitized."<sup>46</sup> One is tempted to condemn the production of unrealistic historic and architectural environments, but at the same time it seems difficult to believe that many North Americans would want a truly authentic restoration if that meant going without contemporary sanitary and technological facilities.

The major problem as far as restoration is concerned is that of determining to what state or condition should a building or historic district be restored. In North America there is a tendency

...to develop preconceived notions about the 'best' architectural period of a particular area and then to restore buildings in it to that particular style. This has often been called 'to early-up a building'. The restoration attempts to be exacting in terms of known (or assumed) details in order to represent the priority of the particular style.<sup>47</sup>

The main disadvantages of this approach are, firstly, cost, and, secondly, the inadaptability of the restored structure. "This effort to recreate authenticity (even though new materials, and often new methods, are frequently used) tends to inflate restoration costs."<sup>48</sup> Miner suggests that this "purity" approach might be acceptable for the occasional building

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<sup>46</sup>David Lowenthal, "The American Scene," Geographical Review, LVIII, No. 1 (1968), pp. 77-78.

<sup>47</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

that is appropriate for museum use, but in general the European approach of "continuity" seems to be more desirable.- "The contribution made by all eras to the erection of a monument must be respected since unity of style is not an objective to be achieved during restoration."<sup>49</sup> This approach towards restoration permits the retention of additions and alterations and thus reflects the continuity of a building over a period of time. It is a much more flexible approach from the viewpoint of fitting old structures to new uses, and, as has been demonstrated, adaptability is a most important factor as far as the survival of old structures are concerned.

A problem of a somewhat different nature is that of the social effects of preservation, and to date this is apparently a much neglected aspect of preservation policies and programmes. Preservation ideally attempts to protect treasured elements of the urban fabric and to facilitate the creation of a better environment for the community as a whole, but in actuality the effects on the people living and working within the historic districts and individual structures can be quite disastrous. Historic districts need to be seen within the context of the social structure of the community as a whole. "Very often they form part of the 'zone in transition' immediately adjoining the central business district...In this

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<sup>49</sup>"The Venice Charter", Historic Preservation, XVII (January-February, 1965), p. 22.

position...they may cater for a distinctive pattern of uses not found elsewhere."<sup>50</sup> The most historic parts of North American cities are often the most decayed parts, and in many cases they provide cheap accommodation for new immigrants, transients, minority groups and other less affluent segments of society: in addition, they are likely to house a whole range of small-scale activities that value such features as central location, relatively low rents and reasonably dry storage facilities.<sup>51</sup> Restoration of historic buildings involves substantial financial investments and this often results in increased rents which may eventually lead to the displacement of the existing population and activities. The boutiques, gourmet restaurants and fashionable apartments flourish in the restored old towns whilst the original residents are forced to flee in search of new quarters to other low rental parts of the city.<sup>52</sup>

Is it possible to restore historic districts without disrupting the sociological environment? Or must preservation always imply re-arrangements of the population and of economic activities? In many instances historic districts in central city areas have been revived by means of

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<sup>50</sup>R. E. Pahl, "Conservation Conspectus: Social Aspects," The Architectural Review, CXLVIII, No. 886 (1970), p. 369.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>This phenomenon is very effectively demonstrated by recent trends in Vancouver, but most large North American cities show similar trends.

comprehensive preservation programmes. Formerly fashionable residential districts which had fallen upon hard times have been revitalised in recent years; Society Hill in Philadelphia and College Hill, Providence (Rhode Island), are two of the better known examples.<sup>53</sup> The economic cost of preservation was in these cases considerable, as was to be expected, but what of the social cost?

The displacement of an existing population and pattern of activities will create a cost which the community, and not simply the individuals concerned, must bear... If the process of conservation implies the displacement of those unable to conserve by those with the will and the wealth to do so, then it is most important that those displaced do not get doubly penalized. Not only may they have to pay higher rent for a standard of accommodation they do not necessarily want, they may also find themselves further from the town centre with its services and facilities...Perhaps a conservation compensation allowance will be needed.<sup>54</sup>

There would seem to be a very good case for preservation programmes to give more concern to the sociological consequences of preservation activity.

The nature, magnitude and complexity of the problems confronting and arising from preservation activity vary greatly. The problems that are illustrated here are merely those that arise most frequently, and they demonstrate some of the major difficulties encountered by preservation groups and government departments. The preservation of buildings and districts of historic and architectural significance is often a complex

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<sup>53</sup> See Margaret Carroll, Historic Preservation Through Urban Renewal (Washington D.C.: Housing and Home Finance Agency, Urban Renewal Administration, 1963).

<sup>54</sup> Pahl, "Conservation Conspectus: Social Aspects," pp. 369-370.

procedure; the contemporary role of preservation is by no means clearcut.

### Preservation Processes

In spite of the apparent complexity of factors that influence any effort to preserve an urban element, a number of well defined and effective preservation processes or methods have emerged. A variety of techniques are now available for the purpose of converting preservation philosophy into action.

Before any preservation effort can begin, it is necessary to know which structures are worthy of preservation. Thus the evaluation and recording of buildings and districts of historic and architectural significance is an important initial step in any comprehensive community or regional preservation programme.

Although the approaches to preservation are many, they all share the common initial problem of establishing an inventory and rating system of the outstanding buildings in the area involved. ... In fact, the process of preserving and discarding presupposes a knowledge of all structures and features of the area. Values cannot be assigned to some structures unless an overall knowledge of all structures is first obtained and then a relative value system worked out. Consequently, preservation needs not only a thorough inventory but an intelligent rating system to make its operation a meaningful one; otherwise, the retention of historically, architecturally and esthetically outstanding buildings and features becomes an arbitrary matter.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 412.

The trend towards a more comprehensive and methodical approach to preservation is reflected in the growing number of inventories and surveys that have been recently carried out in numerous North American cities.<sup>56</sup> But the recording and evaluation of urban elements is only an introductory step which enables a community to gain a clearer picture of its historical and architectural resources. For these resources to be preserved requires the careful selection and subsequent implementation of further techniques or methods.

These techniques or methods can, for the sake of convenience, be divided into two broad categories: firstly, those that depend upon public action, and secondly, those that involve essentially private action. In reality, though, most preservation efforts involve a combination of both private and public action.

Zoning is probably the most traditional method used by municipalities for controlling urban form and function. Conventional zoning can to some extent offer protection to historic areas. "Matters normally covered in the zoning ordinance (such as uses permitted, density, building height, lot coverage, setback lines, yards and other open spaces, signs, and off-street parking and loading) do have an influence on the character of an area."<sup>57</sup> However, conventional zoning does not prevent the demolition

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<sup>56</sup> See for example, College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal (Providence, R.I.: Providence City Plan Commission, 1959).

<sup>57</sup> Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 23.

or alteration of buildings, and it lacks architectural control provisions. It is for these reasons that many cities have introduced special historic district zoning legislation, and this has been added to existing zoning ordinances.

Historic district zoning ordinances tend to follow a very similar pattern from one community to another, particularly in the United States. The fundamental objective of historic district zoning is to prevent the destruction and/or ruination of areas or districts possessing historic, architectural and aesthetic merit. This objective is approached firstly by defining the boundaries of the historic district, and it is here that the introductory surveys of significant elements are particularly important. In almost all cases the designated historic districts form compact spatial sections of the city, centred around major concentrations of notable buildings, rather than being linear or discontinuous in form.<sup>58</sup> The second step in the development of historic district zoning is the establishment of specific architectural controls within the historic district and the creation of a board whose function it is to administer these controls. The names of these review boards differ from one community to another (Board of Architectural Review, Historic District Commission and Architectural Commission are commonly used titles) as do the size and membership requirements, but the duties and powers of these boards generally

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<sup>58</sup> See Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, p. 420.

possess many similarities.

The principal objectives of the architectural review board are to maintain the distinctive character of the district and the architectural integrity of the particular notable structures within it and to prevent intrusions into the district that would be incompatible with this established character. To accomplish these objectives the board is given the authority to review all proposals to alter or add to existing buildings or to construct new facilities in the district. Before a building permit can be issued, the board must review the exterior appearance of the proposal in terms of its compatibility with the character of the district and issue a certificate of appropriateness. If the proposal is not acceptable, the board withholds the certificate, indicating its reasons and perhaps offering suggestions. The applicant must revise his plans to satisfy the board... Review boards also usually have the power to delay the moving or demolition of any significant structure within the district for a certain time period... to allow persons and groups concerned about the preservation of the structure time to attempt to find potential purchasers and/or reuses for the building.<sup>59</sup>

Height controls are also commonly included within historic district zoning regulations in order to protect historic skylines, outstanding vistas and the overall character of historic areas.

Historic district zoning has proven itself to be a most effective form of public action in the field of urban preservation, and this is reflected in the rapid increase in the number of communities that utilise this technique,<sup>60</sup> and in its current popularity with both tourists and

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<sup>59</sup> Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> See Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, pp. 18-19, and Wolf Von Eckardt, "Saving Our Landmarks," Saturday Review, Sept. 5, 1970, pp. 52-53.



local inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> However, historic district zoning of this type is only really applicable in those communities that possess marked concentrations of historic and architectural resources; in many North American cities the historic and architectural resources are widely scattered or are to be found in small clusters, isolated from one another, and hence this standard form of historic district zoning is unsuitable. More flexible approaches, suitable for communities with scattered historic and architectural resources "...that need flexibility in regulations for specific areas rather than blanket regulations covering compact concentrations of important structures,"<sup>62</sup> are being experimented with in a number of communities.<sup>63</sup> A few North American cities have established special preservation commissions that operate outside the context of the zoning ordinance, but whose functions and powers are similar to those of the architectural review boards.<sup>64</sup>

Another commonly used public-controlled preservation technique is

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<sup>61</sup>See Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, pp. 425-426.

<sup>62</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup>See for example, Preserving Norfolk's Heritage: Proposed Zoning for Historic and Cultural Conservation (Norfolk, Virginia: Department of City Planning, December 1965).

<sup>64</sup>The Vieux Carré Commission in New Orleans and the New York Landmarks Commission are two of the best known examples.

that of the scenic easement. ✓

It is a device that allows preservation of the public interest in the appearance of the building without substantially affecting the use of the property. The purpose is to prevent exterior alterations detrimental to the original architectural design. The approach is for a public body to acquire, through purchase, condemnation, or perhaps donation, a negative easement over the facade of the building which does not allow the owner to alter the exterior appearance of the building without approval of a designated public agency...this approach provides compensation to the owner for the particular property right he gives up.<sup>65</sup>

The main advantages of the easement approach would seem to be that it deals with individual structures rather than entire districts, and it allows the building to continue in productive private use. Conversely, this approach has the disadvantage of not being able to offer protection "...against detrimental environmental influences from adjacent properties unless similar easements are required there also."<sup>66</sup> ✓

Urban renewal planning is another important contemporary method of preserving historic and architecturally important structures. Urban renewal projects provide many opportunities for preservation, and many North American cities have in recent years taken advantage of Federal urban renewal laws and funds in order to preserve and redevelop historic

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<sup>65</sup> Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, pp. 29-30.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

districts. It is in the older central areas of North American cities that the greatest concentrations of historic and architecturally significant structures are to be found, and it is these same areas that are most likely to suffer from physical deterioration and decay and are therefore in the greatest need of renewal treatment. Renewal and preservation have in many instances shown themselves to be compatible processes.

Through proper coordination with overall comprehensive planning and preservation program approaches, urban renewal can greatly aid the objectives of historic and cultural conservation. A major contribution is the provision of improved settings for historic structures. Through urban renewal, blighting conditions in the vicinity can be removed. With various public improvements, an improved environment can be provided for historic structures. New uses can be returned to old areas, and new construction can be related to the old through appropriate aesthetic controls within renewal project areas. Restoration of important structures can be aided by the local public agency either by acquisition and resale to private interests for restoration or by acquisition and restoration by the local public agency for later resale...In addition ...the local agency can move historic buildings to new sites inside or outside the project...<sup>67</sup>

The main advantages of preservation through urban renewal are probably the financial and technical assistance provided by the Federal Government (be it that of the U.S.A. or Canada), and the closely associated high degree of coordination in the planning and execution of the renewal projects. The effect, at its most successful, has been to revitalise

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<sup>67</sup> Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, pp. 30-31.

historic districts by preserving and restoring outstanding individual structures and groups of structures, whilst adding new structures which harmonize with the existing historic buildings in an effective manner.- Philadelphia's Society Hill, New Haven's Wooster Square and Victoria's Bastion Square provide well known examples.

Another widely publicised method of encouraging preservation is through tax exemption or reduction. "The basic idea is to encourage the owner to restore and preserve the building by offsetting some of his improvements expenses with some type of tax relief."<sup>68</sup> In actuality, not many communities make use of this technique as yet. New Orleans is one of the few that does, and there the Vieux Carré Commission has the power to recommend suitable candidates for tax exemption to the city's Commission Council. This is enacted in special situations for structures possessing historic and architectural merit, and the exemption may remain effective for a number of years. "Taxes may be exempted by the city provided that the owners of such structures and their heirs and assigns agree by formal contract that the structure shall never be altered or demolished without the approval of the Vieux Carré Commission."<sup>69</sup> Montague and Wrenn warn that "safeguards to prevent the abuse of an exemption should

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<sup>68</sup> Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal, p. 7.

be included within such a proposal,"<sup>70</sup> but it seems that if correctly approached, tax incentives can be a useful means of encouraging preservation and restoration by property owners.

Direct acquisition, by purchase or expropriation, provides a further public method of preserving historic and architecturally-outstanding buildings. The Vieux Carré Commission of New Orleans has the authority to recommend that the city expropriate historic properties if they are in danger or would be safer under the ownership of the city, but few other communities have similar powers as yet. However, it is quite common for public agencies to purchase historic and architecturally-outstanding structures when the opportunity arises, particularly if the building is in an appropriate location and can be put to active use. "Decisions on public acquisition must be based not only on the architectural and historical merit of the structure but also on the potential for productive use by public agencies."<sup>71</sup> Thus public acquisition is often an effective method of preserving outstanding individual structures, but it is unlikely under normal circumstances that it would be able to bring about the preservation of groups of structures and historic districts.

The main private method of preserving historic and architecturally-significant buildings is by direct acquisition, and subsequent restoration

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<sup>70</sup>Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, pp. 18-19.

<sup>71</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 32.

and maintenance. There are numerous examples within cities throughout North America of private individuals and private organizations purchasing historic buildings for their own use, restoring them, and maintaining them in good condition. Private acquisition can be an integral part of a comprehensive public preservation project, or it can be a totally independent action. The success of public preservation projects that involve the preservation of large numbers of structures within urban areas, as in the case of historic district zoning, is obviously very much dependent on private individuals and private groups for the acquisition and maintenance of the historic structures.<sup>72</sup>

A number of other private preservation methods are being used at the present time, of which the revolving fund method is probably the most common.

The revolving fund technique applies private funds to the redevelopment and conservation of historic areas. A private organisation raises funds to purchase and restore historic structures. These are then rented or resold (usually with deed restrictions to protect the exterior appearance of the structures), with the proceeds returning to the fund to be applied to other structures.<sup>73</sup>

The Historic Charleston Foundation is probably the best known organisation making use of the revolving fund method, and it has been successful in restoring and preserving a large number of structures in the

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<sup>72</sup>See College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal, pp. 3-4.

<sup>73</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 33.

Ansonborough district of Charleston.<sup>74</sup>

The use of restrictive covenants provides another private method of preserving certain aspects of the character of an area. The restrictive covenant is a legal device attached to land that "...binds owners and their successors to particular practices with respect to their property"<sup>75</sup>, the intention of it being to encourage a high standard of maintenance. Such covenants have been used effectively in prestige neighborhoods, as in Louisburg Square in Boston, where there is widespread concern amongst property owners and residents for the appearance and character of the area.<sup>76</sup> But the general applicability of restrictive covenants seems to be low because of the difficulty of obtaining a consensus of approval from a variety of owners in any given area.<sup>77</sup>

A particularly promising technique for financing historic preservation has been the development of privately financed profit-making corporations, of which Historic Georgetown, Inc., in Washington D.C., provides a good example. This organisation was formed by a group of

<sup>74</sup>Montague and Wrenn, Planning for Preservation, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 33.

<sup>76</sup>See Tunnard and Pushkarev, Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?, pp. 416-417.

<sup>77</sup>Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, p. 33.

local residents for the purpose of safeguarding and restoring a number of mid-18th century houses whose future was in jeopardy. The corporation was looked upon as a business proposition, and was thus concerned with making a financial profit. It has subsequently succeeded in preserving the historic homes and appears to be a successful business organisation.<sup>78</sup> Similar private financing organisations are operating in the historic areas of such communities as Savannah, Cincinnati and Baltimore, and in most instances they provide an extremely effective way of financing preservation.

Thus the variety of both public and private preservation techniques that are available and in use at the present time is extensive. It would also seem necessary to mention the importance of educational programmes, seminars, conferences, lectures and literature on preservation, and of the training of skilled personnel to execute and administer preservation projects, as these are all essential ingredients of the contemporary popularity of historic and architectural preservation.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>See Citizens Association of Georgetown, Georgetown 1980 (Washington D.C.: Citizens Association of Georgetown, 1969), and College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup>For information on educational and promotional aspects of preservation activity see: American Institute of Architects, Arousing the Community to its Architectural Heritage (Washington D.C.: American Institute of Architects, 1961); College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal, p. 11; "Historic Preservation and the Business Community", Historic Preservation, XXI, No. 4 (1969); Seven Basic Steps Towards an Effective Program for Preserving an Historic Site or Building (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, n.d.); and Tony P. Wrenn, "The Tourist Industry and Promotional Publications," Historic Preservation, XVI, No. 3 (1964).



The wide range of preservation techniques can be interpreted as a response to a wide range of problems. The applicability of any one or of any combination of these techniques is obviously determined by its appropriateness to any given preservation problem. In the past, private acquisition in a random fashion was the essence of preservation activity in the North American City, but the increased popularity and broadened scope of preservation that has come about in recent years has led to the development of more sophisticated methods. The growing involvement of public agencies would seem to be particularly welcome as it has brought with it a more comprehensive and systematic approach to preservation, which is reflected in the nature and variety of the public preservation techniques that are now operational, and in the success of the large scale historic district/area preservation projects that are so popular at the present time. Nonetheless, the continued importance to preservation of private groups, private individuals and private methods bears reiterating. The private sector is responsible for the successful maintenance of the vast bulk of the architectural and historical resources of North America, whilst it would seem that the main contributions of the public sector are in the recording and evaluation of historic and architectural elements, in the administration of preservation programmes, in the enactment and enforcement of legislation, and in the restoration and maintenance of really outstanding buildings and sites.

### Overall Implications of Preservation Activity

The contemporary role of preservation is thus varied and broad, as is demonstrated by the wide range of justifications, problems and processes that have made themselves apparent. However, the importance of this role varies considerably from one community to another. Preservation would seem to be an issue of some significance in most North American cities; there can be few if any cities that have not at some time or other preserved a building for historic or architectural reasons. Preservation is of particular importance in those cities that possess a large quantity and high quality of historical and architectural resources, especially if the survival of these resources is under serious threat. Thus preservation is of paramount importance in cities such as Boston, Philadelphia and New Orleans, all of which possess very rich and diverse architectural heritages, and numerous buildings and sites with historic and patriotic associations, that are being continually threatened by economic, physical and social forces.

It would appear, though, that the importance of preservation activity is as yet quite negligible in most small country towns, especially those in relatively isolated and/or less prosperous regions (such as the Canadian Maritimes and much of the North West corner of the United States), where the impact of change and progress appears to be much less, and where buildings tend to preserve themselves without the assistance of a conscious preservation movement. But such communities are often rich in historic architecture, and preservation may well become an important

issue in the future as residents come to appreciate the economic potentialities of developing their historic and architectural resources (particularly if the communities are on or near tourist routes), and as urban growth and expansion leads to increased threats to the survival of existing older structures.<sup>80</sup> Preservation is no longer a practice restricted to the historic cities of the Eastern Seaboard and the Southern States; communities of all ages in all parts of North America possess historic and architectural elements of significance (national, regional, or merely local), though they may not always be perceived as such.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Good examples of such communities are provided by many of the old Californian Gold Rush towns (such as Sonora and Grovesville) in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Many of these communities have seen few structural changes since the mid-19th century, and as a result possess numerous buildings of historic and architectural interest.

<sup>81</sup> The problems of defining what is "significant" and what is not, and of classifying structures according to whether they are of national, regional or local importance, are beyond the scope of this work. Some of the most relevant and helpful reports and articles on this aspect of preservation are as follows:- College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal; Committee on Standards and Surveys, Criteria for Evaluating Historic Sites and Buildings (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1956); Department of the Interior, Criteria for Selection of National Parklands and National Landmarks (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1967); Carl Feiss, "Criteria for Historic District Selection", Historic Preservation, XIV, No. 2 (1962), pp. 67-73; R. W. Hale, "Points to Consider in Surveying", Historic Preservation Tomorrow (Williamsburg, Virginia: National Trust for Historic Preservation and Colonial Williamsburg, 1967), pp. 37-38; James C. Massey, "Architectural Surveys", Historic Preservation, XVI, No. 6 (1964), pp. 216-219; Miner, Conservation of Historic and Cultural Resources; National Historic Sites Policy (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, National and Historic Parks Branch, 1968); and Plan and Program for the Preservation of the Vieux Carré (New Orleans: Bureau of Governmental Research, 1968).

The extent to which the values and potentialities of historic and architectural resources are recognized and understood is thus another crucial factor in explaining the importance of preservation activity in any individual North American city.

The main direct effects of successful preservation activity are the protection, restoration and maintenance of historic and architectural elements and their surroundings, resulting in the survival and revitalisation of buildings and districts that would otherwise have been totally obliterated or substantially altered, or would have gradually decayed and degenerated. But, as has been demonstrated, the effects of preservation activity are not necessarily beneficial from the economic and social viewpoints. The likely effects of preservation activity on future urban development need careful consideration, particularly when this preservation activity is being focussed upon large scale historic districts. It would seem that the commercial and economic well-being of a city, and the improvement of transportation facilities and housing conditions, can in some instances be seriously hampered by preservation activity. This point is effectively illustrated by developments in both Boston and New Orleans.

The sociologist Walter Firey has shown how sentimental and symbolic values have led to the preservation of many elements of the townscape of central Boston (Beacon Hill, Boston Common, the old burial grounds and churches, and the Back Bay District are some of the better known

features), and how as a result the growth and expansion of the commercial core has been severely restricted.<sup>82</sup> Though Firey's research was undertaken in the 1940's, the patterns that he observed then have remained to this day, and indeed they have been intensified. The outward expansion of the commercial core has been hindered by the existence of adjacent historic districts and the Common; historic district zoning and other regulations aimed at preserving the appearance and character of significant buildings and districts have succeeded in repelling new construction and commercial expansion, and the effect has been to further the decline of the commercial core whilst suburban shopping centres have thrived.<sup>83</sup> It would be unrealistic to say that preservation has caused the decline of the central business district of Boston (this is a trend common to many large cities in North America), but nonetheless it is a factor that should not be overlooked.

The defeat of the proposed elevated freeway along the Mississippi waterfront in New Orleans (adjoining the Vieux Carré Historic District) provides another interesting case.<sup>84</sup> Freeways and parking lots are

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<sup>82</sup>Walter I. Firey, "Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables", American Sociological Review, X, No. 2 (1945), pp. 140-148. See also Walter I. Firey, Land Use in Central Boston (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) for a discussion of the ecological processes responsible for the spatial patterns of Boston's land use.

<sup>83</sup>See Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield, Boston: The Job Ahead (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 60-67.

<sup>84</sup>See Marcou and O'Leary, "Historic Preservation in New Orleans' French Quarter".

increasingly looked upon to answer the problem of congestion in the North American City (a problem that is intensified in those cities possessing extensive areas built in pre-automobile days), but such features are hardly compatible with historic districts.<sup>85</sup> It is suggested that the precedent created by the defeat of the New Orleans waterfront expressway could have far-reaching consequences. "The ruling is understood to be the first denial of federal funds for a highway on the basis of preserving a historic area and could have wide ranging effects on controversial highway projects in other cities."<sup>86</sup> But will these effects necessarily be desirable?

Should the preservation of historic districts take precedence over the development of more efficient transportation systems or the provision of better housing conditions? This is a question that arises in most of the larger cities, and in many of the smaller ones, at some time or another, and of course there is no clearcut answer. The answer depends upon the quality, quantity and condition of the historical and architectural resources, on the finance and techniques that are available to facilitate preservation action, on the perception and will-power of civic and governmental groups, and on the attractiveness of alternative

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<sup>85</sup>For discussion of the difficulties of absorbing growing quantities of automobile traffic into historic districts see, "New Vehicles for Towns", The Architects' Journal, XVIII (January, 1967), pp. 159-164; Ministry of Transport, Traffic in Towns: A Study of the Long Term Problems of Traffic in Urban Areas (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1963); and Plan and Program for the Preservation of the Vieux Carré.

<sup>86</sup>Marcou and O'Leary, "Historic Preservation in New Orleans' French Quarter", p. 8.

courses of action. Large scale preservation projects, particularly those involving the preservation of historic districts in central city areas, are obviously going to have serious economic and social repercussions for many years to come, and hence such projects need to give careful consideration to possible side effects and long term effects.

The fact that historic and architectural preservation is at the present time a popular course of action, in many instances taking precedence over transportation and housing improvements and commercial expansion, would seem to be a reflection of a widening historical and environmental awareness and an indication of a growing emphasis on less tangible cultural values. But it would appear that preservation and the creation of a more comfortable, efficient and pleasurable environment do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive of each other; with careful planning, preservation can be a positive force helping to revitalise decaying sections of the North American City and to create a better overall urban environment.

## CHAPTER IV

## A CASE STUDY: VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver, British Columbia, is a young and rapidly growing West Coast Canadian City. In many ways it provides a marked contrast to the more famed historic cities that have long been concerned with historic preservation. Only a handful of Vancouver's so-called "Historic Buildings" are more than 80 years old, very few of its structures would be regarded as architecturally significant on a national scale, and the city is hardly famed for its historic events or historic personalities. Vancouver's recorded history seems somewhat uncolourful in comparison with older cities such as Washington, Boston, Montreal and New Orleans, and the same might well be said for its architecture and townscape.<sup>1</sup> It has often been suggested that the appearance of the townscape of Vancouver has been overlooked and neglected in favour of the natural beauty of the sea, mountains and forest that engirdle the city; and about the only architectural elements that attract and sometimes please the eye of the visitor are the high-rises and towers of the West End and downtown, and the villas and split-level houses of the more exclusive outlying suburbs. Vancouver would thus at first seem an unlikely choice for a case study,

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<sup>1</sup>For accounts of the historical development of Vancouver, see Alan Morley, Vancouver: from Milltown to Metropolis (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969), and Eric Nicol, Vancouver (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1970).



but in actuality it presents an interesting field of observation as in recent years preservation has become an issue of importance in spite of the youthfulness of the city and the apparent absence of outstanding historical and architectural qualities.

### Evolution of Preservation Philosophy and Practice<sup>2</sup>

Although Vancouver's urban development can be traced back to the 1860's, the first instance of a building being preserved on account of its historic and architectural qualities was not recorded until 1930. The building was the Old Hastings Mill Store, Vancouver's first store and post office (Plate 6); it was erected in 1865, and it is now regarded as Vancouver's oldest surviving building having been one of the few structures to survive the disastrous fire of 1886. In 1930 the store was threatened with demolition, being located in the midst of an expanding dock area, and it was saved by the actions of an organisation known as the "Native Daughters of British Columbia."<sup>3</sup> The

purpose of the Native Daughters in acquiring the building was, in the words of the organisation's aims and objects: 'to perpetuate and cherish the memory of those pioneers who took part in the early development of the Province of British Columbia,

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<sup>2</sup>This case study attempts to trace the evolution of preservation philosophy and practice in Vancouver from its beginnings in 1930 through until August of 1971.

<sup>3</sup>See "Old Hastings Mill Store 'Stocked' in Memories," Province, June 21, 1962, p. 25; "Memories Span 100 Years," Province, June 12, 1965, p. 27; and "Hodge-Podge of History," Province, November 28, 1968, p. 35.



Plate 6: The Old Hastings Mill Store. - Built in 1865, this was Vancouver's first store and post office. It was saved from destruction in 1930 by the Native Daughters of British Columbia, and now functions as a museum.

and to take an active part in the preservation of historical relics and records in the province'.<sup>4</sup>

The Native Daughters removed the store from its original site on Burrard Inlet to a new site in the nearby residential area of Kitsilano, where the building was restored and opened as a Pioneer Museum in 1931 (see Figure 1). Thus its story is very similar to that of many other buildings preserved in other areas of North America around the same time; it was preserved because of its age (relative to other buildings in the community) and because of its historic associations, and it was made to function as a museum. The citizens of Vancouver must have been satisfied with the preservation of this one historic building, for little further pressure to preserve buildings for historic or architectural reasons was to make itself felt until the 1950's.

Indeed, it has taken a considerable number of years for an awareness and appreciation of the historical, aesthetic and architectural merits of the older Vancouver buildings and districts to develop, and until very recently age has been the primary justification for preserving a building. In 1950 Irving House was bought by the adjoining City of New Westminster primarily because it was the oldest surviving building in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (built in 1862), and it was opened as an "Historic Centre" and converted to museum use; its architectural and aesthetic qualities were of only secondary consideration. Furthermore,

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<sup>4</sup>Brian Gauvin, "The Old Hastings Mill Store," Beautiful British Columbia, Fall, 1970, pp. 31-33.

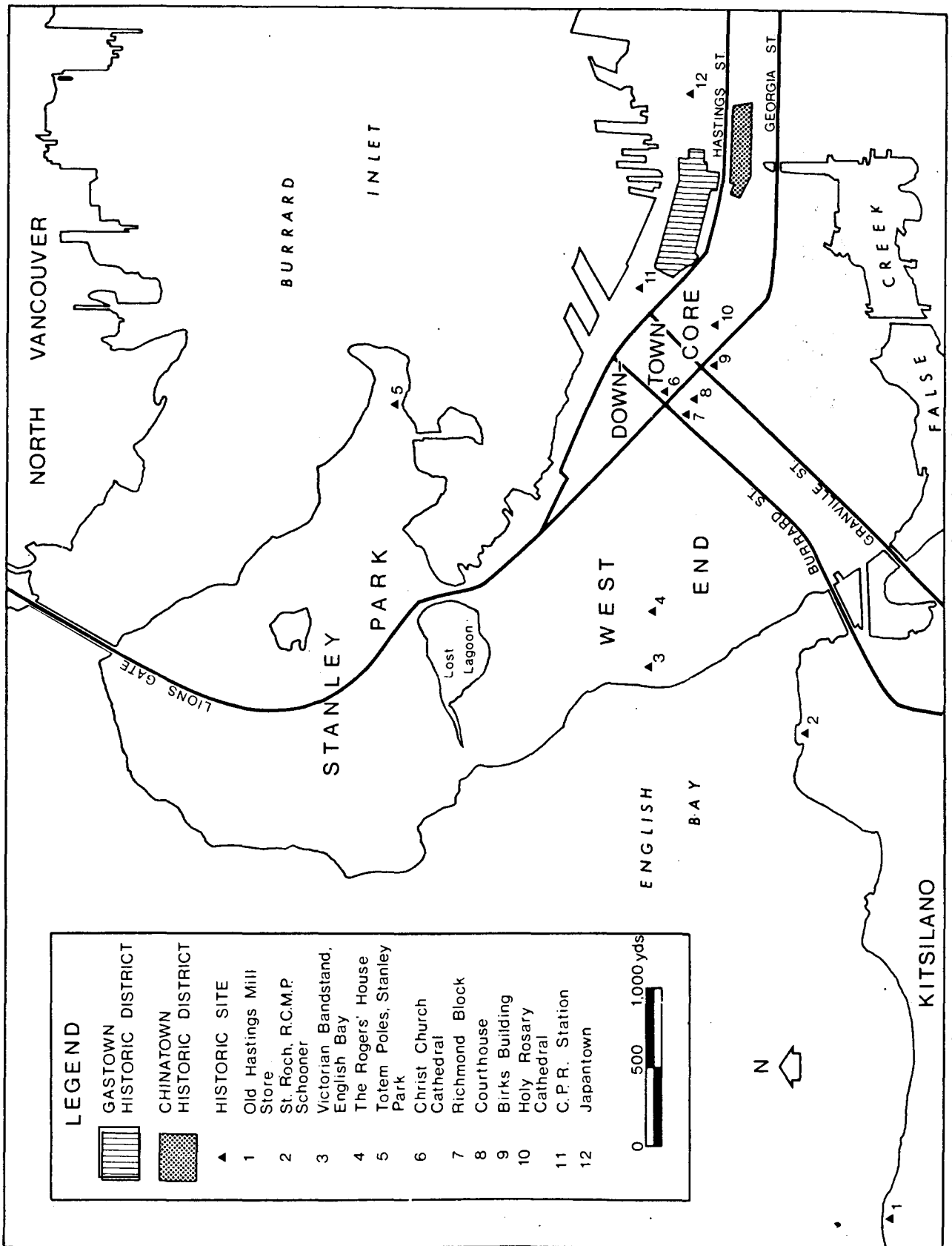


Figure I: Vancouver, Historic Districts and Major Historic Sites

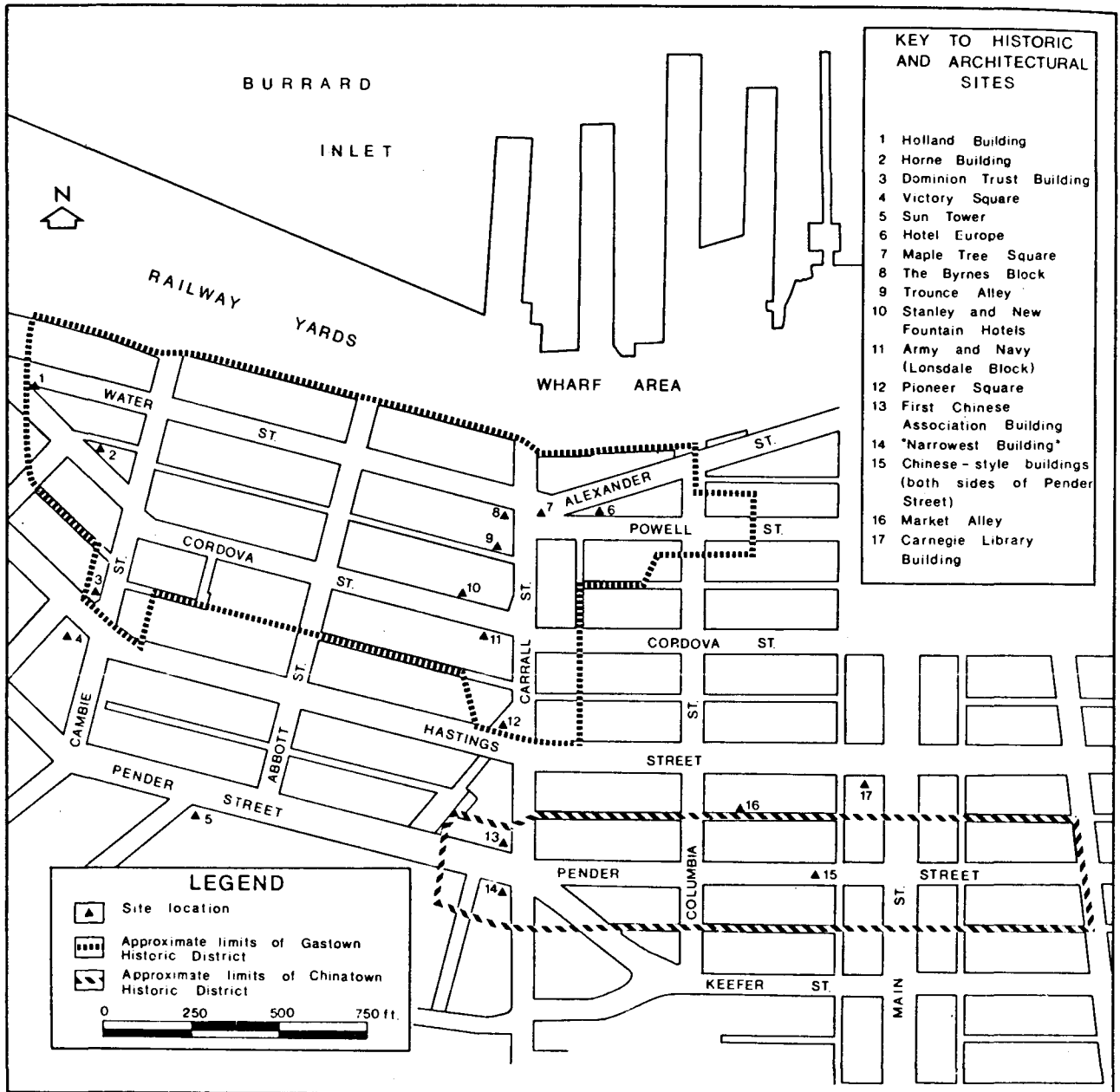


Figure II: Gastown and Chinatown: Street Patterns and Major Historic Sites (N.B. The boundaries of Gastown and Chinatown were delineated on the basis of past studies of the areas; it is intended that they be regarded as approximate borders rather than as rigid boundaries).

when the Fitzgerald McCleary farmhouse was torn down by the City of Vancouver in 1957, most of the complaints were because it was Vancouver's oldest home, not because it was of particular architectural or aesthetic merit. This North American obsession with "the oldest", "the biggest", and "the best" is thus exemplified by the experiences of Vancouver.<sup>5</sup>

Subsequent preservation attempts in Vancouver have been largely confined to two small areas of the city, these being the historic core area, now popularly known as Gastown but sometimes referred to as the Old Town or The Townsite, and the adjacent and only slightly younger district of Chinatown (see Figures I and II). These two areas contain the oldest buildings in Vancouver; many of the buildings that replaced those destroyed by the fire of 1886 (i.e. buildings erected in the late 1880's and in the 1890's) remain to this day, and most of them are still in good physical condition. The original (pre-1886) buildings of Gastown were built of wood and offered little resistance to the devastating fire, but those that replaced them were built to last, being constructed of brick and stone. The survival of these buildings has been further assisted firstly, by the south-westerly shift of the central business district, a trend which began around 1904 and has had the effect of reducing pressures on Gastown properties, and secondly, by the efforts of Gastown property owners to

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<sup>5</sup> See David Lowenthal, "The American Scene," Geographical Review, LVIII, No. 1 (1968), pp. 61-88.

keep their properties in good condition.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of repeated attempts by the City government to downgrade the Gastown area,<sup>7</sup> property owners chose to invest in the buildings so as to maintain structural condition and keep the buildings in active use. Renovation and rehabilitation of structures has taken place in both Gastown and Chinatown, but this has been undertaken strictly as an investment, and until very recently very little consideration has been given to the historic and architectural qualities of these structures. In 1958 an indication of an interest in the architectural qualities of some of the older buildings was provided by the painting and cleaning up of a number of buildings around the intersection of Cambie and Cordova Streets in Gastown (Figure II); this was undertaken by local property owners as a British Columbia Centennial project, and appears to have been quite a successful venture.<sup>8</sup> But in general it would seem true to say that until very recently few people took any real interest in the heritage or even the appearance of Vancouver.

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<sup>6</sup>Information on the historical development of Gastown and Chinatown is largely derived from Morley's, Vancouver: from Milltown to Metropolis.

<sup>7</sup>See M. Hein, M. L'Heureux, B. Thomlinson, and M. Wick, "Skid Road, Vancouver" (unpublished Master of Social Work Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1966); and M. J. Sommers, "Renewed Life for Gastown" (unpublished M.B.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1970).

<sup>8</sup>Information on early preservation attempts in the Gastown area is primarily derived from a personal interview with M. G. Thomson, Chairman of the Townsite Committee, in Vancouver during March 1969.

In the early 1960's, however, three events took place that suddenly generated a wider interest in the heritage, architecture and appearance of the City of Vancouver. Firstly, a tour of West Coast cities was undertaken (in 1962) by the Downtown Rehabilitation Advisory Board, a body appointed by the Mayor and Council of Vancouver to gain an understanding of current philosophy on urban renewal and rehabilitation.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, the English Civic Trust Film of restoration work undertaken in the Magdalen Street District of Norwich (England) received numerous showings in the Vancouver and Victoria areas during 1962 and 1963. Thirdly, during the same period, restoration work began in nearby Victoria and in a number of other more distant West Coast cities.

The tour of West Coast cities was particularly important in that it was this tour that first brought the successful revival of the Jackson Square area of San Francisco (Plate 5) to the attention of public officials in Vancouver. Here was an area that was very similar in age, architecture, occupancy and character to Vancouver's own Gastown. Jackson Square was a decaying and blighted warehouse district in the old core of San Francisco, but in the late 1950's large-scale restoration work was undertaken and it was converted into "one of the foremost Decorative Arts Show Room areas in the West."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>9</sup>For the findings of this Advisory Board see, Vancouver City Planning Department, Redevelopment in Downtown Vancouver (Vancouver: City Planning Department, June 1962).

<sup>10</sup>M. G. Thomson, "The Townsite Steering Committee Newsletter," Vancouver, January 1964, p. 2.



All of the restoration and development in Jackson Square has been through private funds of the participating business people in the Square, rather than with public assistance...Starting with the original buildings bought along Jackson Street, and continuing with new owners and tenants of all the other buildings in the area, all restoration and remodelling of the old buildings has been done by the individuals concerned. Today, the originally handsome architectural details of many of Jackson Square's buildings are revealed as they were when first built in the 1850's, enhanced and refurbished through the efforts of the present owners and the tenants.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Jackson Square in San Francisco provided the first clue as to what could be done in Vancouver's Gastown in order to rejuvenate the area, and by 1963 a number of property owners had already become concerned with developing the district as a centre for the decorative arts.

But it was the Civic Trust "Magdalen Street" film that really sparked off an interest in preservation. This film was obtained from England by Vancouver's Community Arts Council, an organisation that has done much to stimulate an interest in the appearance of Vancouver, and the film was shown to most of the municipalities in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, in addition to members of the Provincial government in Victoria, to Chambers of Commerce and to the aldermen of Vancouver and Victoria. [The film was of the pilot restoration efforts of the Civic Trust, demonstrating "the multiple benefits of intelligent planning,

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<sup>11</sup>"The Jackson Square Story," December 1962, p. 2. Reprint made available by the Townsite Committee, Vancouver, 1964.

beautification and control of city streets."<sup>12</sup>

The impact of this film was considerable. One of the outcomes of the showing of the Civic Trust film was the formation of the Townsite Association, an organisation comprised of property owners in the Gastown area who determined to work together in their aims to revitalise the area and to encourage decorative arts shops and firms to establish themselves there. In 1962 the Townsite Association began to offer guided tours and slide presentations in order to stimulate a wider interest in Gastown. The Townsite Association decided that the so-called "Norwich Plan" (outlined in the Magdalen Street film) would not work in their own area, but instead embarked upon a similar, but not quite so ambitious, scheme to paint up a number of buildings in Gastown in time for the 1967 Centennial. According to former Townsite Association Chairman, Gerald Thomson, [the main reasoning behind this renovation project was that the property owners firmly believed that the area could still play a useful role in the economic life of the city, and that as the buildings were structurally sound, property owners chose to upgrade and renovate rather than tear down and build anew: "The historical feature was a bonus which we felt could contribute to the life of the city."<sup>13</sup>

Another outcome of the Civic Trust film was the improvement scheme

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted from Community Arts Council News, February, 1963.

<sup>13</sup>Pat Carney, "New Life for City's Cordova-Water District," Province, December 21, 1963, p. 16.

embarked upon in 1964 for the Richmond Block on Robson Street (Figure I).

Situated on the North side of the street, the block houses six stores whose tenants cooperated in getting the scheme under way. These buildings have been steam-cleaned to reveal the rather pleasant yellow brick and the woodwork freshly painted. Very gay awnings of purple, blue, green and red are to be installed, as well as new ornamental lighting on the face of the building at the level of the awnings. A Vancouver firm of industrial designers...was retained as consultants by the owner and tenants of the block and the project has already gone a long way to proving that old buildings can be refurbished, bad features disguised and good ones highlighted. Robson Street is the gayer for it. Mr. David Devine, of the Civic Arts Committee on the Community Arts Council, whose special concern this project is, talked about the history of the scheme recently. 'The whole idea is patterned on the work of the Civic Trust in Britain, specifically the Norwich Plan...This is a limited pilot project but everyone is very enthusiastic about it and we hope it is the start of many more.'<sup>14</sup>

However, the future of the successfully restored Richmond Block was in no way safeguarded, and it was demolished within two years to make way for a high-rise office block. But this project did have important effects in that it attracted a considerable amount of publicity, which helped arouse a wider interest in preservation, and it marked the beginning of the Vancouver Community Arts Council's close involvement in local preservation activity.

In the meantime, historic and architectural preservation was becoming a fashionable concept in nearby Victoria, the provincial capital of British Columbia, and in a number of other more distant West Coast cities such as

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<sup>14</sup> Community Art Council News, June, 1964.

Portland and Sacramento. The Civic Trust film had been particularly well received in Victoria, and there was an immediate and enthusiastic response from the City Council there which led initially to the restoration of the old City Hall, and ultimately to the restoration and preservation of a number of buildings in both the Centennial Square and Bastion Square districts.<sup>15</sup> Bastion Square is in the oldest sector of the city, overlooking the harbour, and it had fallen into warehouse use, and into decay and disrepair, prior to the recent preservation activity. Thus there were many close parallels between Victoria's Bastion Square and Vancouver's Gastown, though the latter is a much more extensive area. Bastion Square has been fully restored and redeveloped in a most attractive and fascinating manner, very much along the lines of the new type of "preservation-development" that is represented in San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square and the Cannery.<sup>16</sup>

Victoria's success at preserving and reviving portions of its historic core has, as might be expected, generated a response from rival Vancouver. The Community Arts Council, The Townsite Association, and other interested individuals and groups, including the architectural firm of Birmingham and Wood, got down to spreading the story of the success of preservation work in Victoria and other cities. Birmingham and Wood

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<sup>15</sup> See Peter Cotton, "Victoria," Western Homes and Living, October, 1966, pp. 16-20.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

was the first architectural firm to get involved with the idea of preserving the historic core of Vancouver, and in 1965 they moved their offices into Chinatown, and intensified their involvement with the Chinatown and Gastown areas. The Townsite Association continued to encourage property owners in Gastown to restore their buildings privately.

Further evidence of a growing interest in preservation was provided in February 1964 when the Vancouver City Planning Department brought out a report on Chinatown,<sup>17</sup> the main objective of which was to suggest ways in which the area could be improved, its character strengthened and its tourist potential increased. This report suggested a programme of improvement which would give Vancouver's Chinatown an appearance in keeping with its stature as the second largest Chinatown in North America; such a programme would have involved the restoration of existing Chinatown buildings, many of which display distinctive Chinese architectural and artistic features, such as recessed balconies and decorative cornices and pediments (Plate 12). Thus for the first time City Hall hinted at the possibility of preserving (in one sense or another) a distinct area of Vancouver, although it did not lay down any precise guidelines.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, by the mid-1960's there was plentiful evidence of a growing

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<sup>17</sup>Vancouver City Planning Department, Chinatown, Vancouver B.C.: Design Proposal for Improvement (Vancouver: City Planning Department, February 1964).

<sup>18</sup>This 1964 Proposal for Improvement met with considerable opposition from the Chinese Community. See "Caution Urged in Chinatown," Province, May 15, 1964, p. 8, and "Chinatown Project Hits Snag," Province, June 19, 1964, p. 33.

awareness of the historic and architectural qualities and preservation potentialities of Gastown and Chinatown. But this awareness had developed just in time, for within a period of 2 years the existence of both Gastown and Chinatown was to be seriously threatened by urban renewal and redevelopment projects.

It had been evident for some time that City Hall was interested in redeveloping the Gastown area of Vancouver, and in 1966 this intention was confirmed by the unveiling of the plans for the large scale Marathon Development, which is generally referred to as "Project 200".<sup>19</sup> This development was planned to extend from Cordova Street two blocks northwards to the waterfront (see Figure II), and was to consist of high-rise office towers and apartment blocks built on terraces overlooking Burrard Inlet. Its construction would necessitate the demolition of a number of Gastown's (and Vancouver's) oldest buildings, and would have the effect of dividing Gastown into two sections, western and eastern, which would be cut off from each other and dwarfed by the towers and terraces of Project 200. In spite of the already apparent growing interest in the architectural and historical qualities of the townscape of Gastown, there was no outright opposition to the proposal at this time. To most people, Project 200 must initially have seemed an attractive and uncontroversial proposal. One of its main objectives was to revive what was generally

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<sup>19</sup> See "\$200 Million for Waterfront," Vancouver Sun, June 10, 1966, p. 1; "Giant 200 Plan for City Today," Province, June 28, 1966, p. 1; and "Some of the Property Yet to Be Acquired," Province, June 29, 1966, p. 2.

regarded as a decayed and degenerating section of the city, and it was intended that the project should completely change the social character of the area by providing housing for a sizeable middle-class population. With the gradual decline of the commercial importance of Gastown, the area had become an extension of the Hastings Street Skid Road district, with an abundance of cheap hotels, rooming houses and taverns catering to transients, the economically deprived, and social outcasts.<sup>20</sup> It would seem that City Hall gave little consideration to the likely effects of the Project 200 Development on this resident population of Gastown, and the latter were too disorganised or uninterested to put forward any real opposition to the Project 200 scheme. But when City Hall tried to treat Chinatown and the Chinese Community in much the same manner, the reaction was very different.

Vague proposals for urban renewal and expressways were nothing new in the East End of Vancouver, but in the autumn of 1967 these proposals took on a different dimension when the City Council approved the construction of a freeway and connector link through the heart of Chinatown.

On a dismal morning, October 17, 1967, City Council approved the Carrall Street alignment, a six block long, 80 foot wide elevated freeway link, that would flatten one commercial block of Chinatown, sever the remaining blocks from the city centre and cast a shadow of decay over the area, including Gastown.

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<sup>20</sup> See Hein, L'Heureux, Thomlinson and Wick, "Skid Road, Vancouver".

Meanwhile an urban renewal scheme was in progress that would demolish the residential area east of Gore Street, pay the people for their homes and send them down the cobbled street with a social worker on each arm and their soul in a sack. By evening of the same day, interested civic groups had united in protest. Students marched in the streets, black mourning banners hung from buildings. A crisis had occurred and a conscience had been awakened. A public meeting overflowed City Council Chambers. This was followed by another public meeting of 1500 people in an auditorium where 27 groups presented briefs.<sup>21</sup>

This unanticipated public outcry had its effect for in January 1968 City Council rescinded the Freeway Motion. "Vancouver stopped on the brink of destroying one of its most unique and valuable assets."<sup>22</sup> The Chinese community had survived another battle, and Chinatown's physical and social character was temporarily safeguarded. But it is somewhat doubtful that historical and architectural arguments for preservation had much direct influence in this Chinatown controversy, as they were of only secondary importance when compared to the dominant arguments for safeguarding the social character of the area. Yet in a community such as Chinatown, the two would seem to be inseparable; destroy the physical fabric and you destroy the social character, and vice-versa. It would appear that the crisis and resulting publicity did much to increase public awareness of the cultural, historic and architectural qualities of

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<sup>21</sup>David N. Spearing, "Chinatown...Vancouver's Heritage," Plywood World, IX, No. 1 (1969), p. 6. The urban renewal scheme mentioned by Spearing is the scheme for the renewal of the Strathcona district of Vancouver's East End ("Urban Renewal Scheme Number 3").

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.



Chinatown, and to increase community concern for the safeguarding of this area. By 1968 civic interest groups such as the Townsite Committee, the Community Arts Council, the Community Planning Association, various Chinatown community organisations, and the architectural firm of Birmingham and Wood, were working together to discuss the potentialities of Chinatown and Gastown, and to publicise their proposals.<sup>23</sup>

The Community Arts Council has been very influential in arousing public interest in the historical and architectural qualities of Gastown and Chinatown. Their guided walking tours through the historic core of Vancouver have been particularly successful. The first of these tours was held on September 22nd 1968, and in spite of the rain, over 700 persons turned out to see a film and slide presentation and to make the tour of Gastown. The objectives of this tour were to provide a last look at the buildings that were to be demolished to make room for Project 200, to strengthen opposition to any future freeway proposals, and to stimulate an interest in restoring and preserving historic buildings within the Gastown area.

This highly successful walking tour...accomplished its purpose. It provided those who took part with a glimpse of what has been done in the past and what can be done in the future in our old townsite. The tour...stimulated enthusiastic support for the preservation and restoration of this unique area of the city.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Spearing, "Chinatown...Vancouver's Heritage," pp. 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Community Arts Council News, October, 1968.

Furthermore, "the Mayor, enchanted with the tour, pledged his support for the efforts to restore Gastown"<sup>25</sup>, a gesture that was indicative of a more sympathetic attitude from City Council towards the preservation of Gastown.

The success of this first walking tour and the related publicity must have gone beyond all reasonable expectations for within the months immediately following the tour there was widespread speculative buying of properties in the Gastown area. The tour had helped publicise the investment potential of the area, and the relatively low cost of properties attracted speculative developers. The "Town of Granville Investments" group was in many ways the pioneer of this trend, having first become active in the Gastown area in 1966 with the acquisition of one of the oldest hotels in Vancouver, the Boulder Rooms on Cordova Street.<sup>26</sup> They intensified their involvement in 1968 by acquiring the Byrnes Block (Plate 7) in Maple Tree Square (Figure II). Restoration of the Byrnes Block, the oldest masonry building in Vancouver (built in 1886-87), began early in 1969, and it was the first really ambitious restoration project to be undertaken in Gastown.<sup>27</sup> The exterior was restored to its original appearance, whilst the interior was drastically renovated to make room for

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<sup>25</sup> Spearing, "Chinatown...Vancouver's Heritage," p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> See Jon Ruddy and Alan Edmonds, "We Can Save Our Cities," Maclean's Magazine, January, 1971, pp. 26-27.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

boutiques, restaurants, an art gallery, offices and residential suites. The restored Byrnes Block became the focal point of new development in Gastown, and other nearby buildings were gradually acquired, renovated or restored, and put into use as galleries, restaurants and boutiques.<sup>28</sup> (Plates 8 and 9 ).

In January 1969, with this speculative activity just beginning, the City Planning Department became officially involved in the preservation and restoration of the historical architecture of the Gastown district. This Department had just completed a beautification project in the downtown district, and they regarded Gastown and Chinatown as districts possessing potential for similar beautification treatment. The Planning Department was "given authority by City Council to proceed with the architects and property owners to develop a preliminary proposal for the coordinated revitalisation of Chinatown-Gastown."<sup>29</sup> This proposal was eventually presented to Vancouver City Council in June 1969 in the form of a report entitled Restoration Report: A Case for Renewed Life in the Old City.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Many newspaper articles have been written on the recent commercial revitalisation of Gastown. See for example, Brenda McCourt, "A New Life for the Town that Gassy Jack Built," Toronto Globe and Mail, September 11, 1969, p. 7; and J. Khouri, "Spirit of Gastown Triumphs Over Lack of Knowhow," Vancouver Sun, July 18, 1970, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Spearing, "Chinatown...Vancouver's Heritage," p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Vancouver City Planning Department, Restoration Report: A Case for Renewed Life in the Old City (Vancouver: City Planning Department, June 1969).



Plate 7: The Byrnes Block, Gastown. - Vancouver's oldest masonry building (1888), and one of the first buildings to be restored during the recent commercial revival of Gastown.



Plate 8: The Hotel Europe and Maple Tree Square. - The Hotel Europe (1908) provides a fine example of a flat-iron building; it juts into Maple Tree Square, the nucleus of recent commercial and preservation developments in Gastown.





Plate 9: Gaoler's Mews, Gastown. - The product of recent beautification work at the rear of the Byrnes Block. This attractive pedestrian precinct provides an indication of what can be done to enhance the appearance of old districts.

The Restoration Report effectively demonstrated that there were many valid reasons for preserving Gastown and Chinatown as distinctive physical and cultural units; it suggested ways in which preservation poli-  
cies could be implemented, and it showed how the appearance of the two areas could be greatly enhanced without destroying their historical and architectural qualities. The main recommendations emerging from this report were that an interim six-month hold should be placed on all demolition permits in the historic areas, appropriate zoning by-laws and protective historic district legislation should be enacted, a formula for tax relief (which would encourage meaningful restoration and renovation) should be derived, a civic commission (an advisory and continuing manage-  
ment board) should be established as an information centre for advice and guidance on preservation and restoration, and that further studies were necessary in order to provide detailed design of improvements to the areas in question, and to help formulate the larger goals and guidelines.<sup>31</sup> It was also suggested that civic funds could be provided for street beautification in the area. In general, the City Council approved of these proposals, and thus the City Planning Department took on a new role as the official coordinators of preservation efforts in the Gastown and Chinatown areas.

Two of the initial effects of City Hall's adoption of preservationist attitudes towards Gastown and Chinatown were the withholding of certain

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<sup>31</sup>Vancouver City Planning Department, Restoration Report: A Case for Renewed Life in the Old City, p. 34 and p. 50.

demolition permits for Gastown buildings, and the defeat of a proposed freeway project that would have run through the core of Gastown.<sup>32</sup> But the implementation of recommendations arising from the 1969 Restoration Report proceeded at a somewhat slow pace.

During the summer of 1970, the City Planning Department released two further reports resulting from the 1969 recommendations. A report entitled "Proposed Project - East Gastown"<sup>33</sup> was released in May 1970, and it was concerned primarily with initial plans for a beautification project in the eastern part of Gastown. In June 1970 the "General Report: Gastown, Chinatown"<sup>34</sup> was released. This report proposed major zoning changes for the Gastown-Chinatown area; it was proposed that the area be temporarily rezoned to CD-1 (i.e. Comprehensive Development District) so as to "permit the continuance of existing uses as well as provide for new development essential to the envisioned character of the area,"<sup>35</sup> thus tightening City control over land use, new construction and aesthetic matters. But it was suggested that "rezoning...would not prevent unwanted

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<sup>32</sup>McCourt, "A New Life for the Town that Gassy Jack Built," p. 7.

<sup>33</sup>Vancouver City Planning Department, "Recommendation Proposed Project - East Gastown," Unpublished Report, File Ref. C.36.4.2, Vancouver City Planning Department, May 29, 1970.

<sup>34</sup>Vancouver City Planning Department, "General Report: Gastown, Chinatown," Unpublished Report, File Ref. C.36.4.2, Vancouver City Planning Department, June 12, 1970.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

demolitions from occurring, could not give effective aesthetic guidance, and cannot be considered in itself as a plan for guiding the evolution of this complex area,"<sup>36</sup> and it was therefore proposed that other types of protective historic district legislation should be thoroughly examined to see if they would be applicable in Vancouver.

The "General Report" also proposed the commencement of detailed studies of Gastown and Chinatown by city officials and consultant groups, and in addition it proposed the establishment of an Advisory Committee for the historic districts. These recommendations were approved by City Council in July 1970; the study of the Gastown historic district was commenced shortly afterwards, and an Historic Area Advisory Board was established early in 1971 for the purpose of protecting the townscapes of Gastown and Chinatown. The formation of this Advisory Board was an outcome of the Province of British Columbia's recognition of Gastown-Chinatown as an Historic and Archaeological Site in January of 1971.

Thus even if progress at the public level was somewhat slow, City Hall was nonetheless (by 1970) obviously aware of the potentialities of Gastown and Chinatown, and it was expressing concern for their futures. It is significant that when Phase I of the Downtown Vancouver Plan was published in 1968, no mention was made of the potential of Gastown and Chinatown or of the need to preserve significant historic structures,<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Vancouver City Planning Department, "General Report: Gastown, Chinatown," Appendix 1, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>See Vancouver City Planning Department, Downtown Vancouver Plan, Part 1: The Issues (Vancouver: City Planning Department, 1968).



but when Phase II of the City Plan (Downtown Vancouver Development Concepts) was issued in June 1970,<sup>38</sup> the need to protect historic structures was strongly emphasized.

The community, respecting those few significant places and structures remaining from its early history, should adopt measures to preserve and revive them, so that they may again be known and vital to the city and a delight to its visitors. Also, recognising that aspects of today's Downtown will have historic value to future generations, then there ought to be concern and policies for the protection of selected areas or buildings that may constitute this legacy.<sup>39</sup>

Thus by 1970 preservationist philosophies were no longer restricted to historical associations, architects and sentimental old ladies; the preservation of key historic and architectural elements was clearly identified by City Hall as a desirable goal in the future development of Vancouver. Within a matter of a mere two years the attitude of City Hall towards the preservation of Gastown and Chinatown had changed very markedly.

Commercial revitalisation of Gastown has continued at an accelerating pace, and between mid-1968 and mid-1971 more than a hundred new businesses were established in the area, bringing about a remarkable transformation in the character of the area.<sup>40</sup> Restaurants, clubs and expensive boutiques and galleries rapidly proliferated, and these have attracted a predominantly

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<sup>38</sup> Vancouver City Planning Department, Downtown Vancouver Development Concepts (Vancouver: City Planning Department, 1970).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> See Khouri, "Spirit of Gastown Triumphs Over Lack of Knowhow," p. 21; "Two 'Old Boxes' to Get Faces Uplifted," Province, November 16, 1970, p. 21; and Sommers, Renewed Life for Gastown.

middle-class clientele; at the same time, old hotels and rooming houses have been converted into residential suites which cater predominantly to young single people.<sup>41</sup> The renovation of these hotels has led to increases in rents, and in a number of cases this has resulted in the eviction of older low-income residents, an issue which has been particularly controversial.<sup>42</sup> Thus the commercial revival of Gastown has been combined with a social transformation of the area. The social repercussions of this renewed interest in the Old Town of Vancouver are particularly complex, and provide much scope for further research.

The question of the extent to which this commercial revitalisation of Gastown can be attributed to a desire to preserve the historic and architectural qualities of the area is somewhat difficult to answer. It would seem that the major factors attracting business establishments into the area between 1968 and 1971 were low rents, low property prices, a location close both to the central business district of Vancouver and to the new Project 200 development, the existence of ancillary businesses in close proximity, and the sound physical conditions of the buildings

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<sup>41</sup>See Khouri, "Spirit of Gastown Triumphs Over Lack of Knowhow," p. 21.

<sup>42</sup>See for example Trevor Lautens, "Crepe Suzette and Cockroaches," University of British Columbia Alumni Chronicle, Autumn, 1970, pp. 18-22; Michael Goldstein, "Gastown: Colour Me Plastic," The Bridge (Newsmagazine of the Alumni Association of Simon Fraser University), May, 1970, pp. 6-7; "Mess of Misery Around Gastown," Province, August 3, 1970, p. 27; and "Human Needs Come First in Gastown Development," Vancouver Sun, September 4, 1970, p. 11.

themselves.<sup>43</sup> But it was the publicity of the historical and architectural qualities of Gastown, and of the need to enhance and protect the buildings of the area, that generated the initial public interest, and brought the potentialities of the area to the attention of both active and prospective businessmen. And even if businesses were attracted into the area by purely monetary motives, the subsequent investment in the old properties of Gastown would seem very likely to have the effect of increasing the survival potential of these properties. Many of the new shop-owners and property owners have in fact taken considerable interest in the appearance of their buildings, and in quite a few instances have set about restoring them so as to reveal the original architectural details (see Plate 10).

Perhaps the first real test of the extent of this new civic concern for historic preservation came in 1969-70 with the debate over the future of the Stanley and New Fountain Hotels, which stood next to each other on one of the most important streets in Gastown (Figure II). These hotels were built between 1909 and 1912,<sup>44</sup> and this can hardly be considered "very old" even in a city as young as Vancouver. They ceased operation in 1968, and the owners of the property, Army and Navy Department Stores, applied for a permit to demolish the two hotels so that they could make room for a parking lot. City Hall stalled for more than a year on their decision to issue a demolition permit whilst a campaign was mounted to

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<sup>43</sup> See Sommers, Renewed Life for Gastown.

<sup>44</sup> "Two Old Boxes to Get Faces Uplifted," p. 21.

save the two hotels. This campaign was started in late 1969 by residents of Gastown who wished to see the hotels retained and put into use as hostels for low-income local residents, and they were joined in 1970 by Cordova Redevelopment Corporation, an organisation formed for the specific purpose of trying to save and rehabilitate the two hotels.<sup>45</sup> This latter group emphasized the need for low-rental accommodation for single men in the Gastown area, and they also stressed the architectural qualities of the two buildings, suggesting that they were particularly important as elements of an historic streetscape, and that they were essential to the beautification plans that the City Planning Department had proposed.<sup>46</sup> The Cordova Redevelopment Corporation applied for a National Housing Act loan to help finance the purchasing and rehabilitation of the two hotels, and this was approved in November 1970, and the hotels were duly purchased from their owners.<sup>47</sup> The restoration and renovation of these hotels was commenced early in 1971; the exteriors were restored to their original conditions (Plate 11), whilst the interiors were renovated so as to provide premises for stores and restaurants on the ground floor, and to allow the construction of 103 single rooms for low income tenants, plus lounges,

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<sup>45</sup>"New Look for Old Hotels This Summer," Province, January 21, 1971, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup>See "Two Old Boxes to Get Faces Uplifted," p. 21.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.



Plate 10: The Holland Building, Gastown. - This building is distinguished by its West Coast style bay windows and by its flat-iron construction; it houses a nightclub and a variety of shops and offices.



Plate 11: The Stanley and New Fountain Hotels, Gastown. - These old hotels (c. 1910) were recently saved from demolition, and in 1971 they were converted into stores, restaurants and low-income suites.

on the upper floors. Thus the existence of the hotels has been safeguarded, and indeed by mid-1971 they had become the nucleus of preservation-developments in the south-eastern corner of Gastown.<sup>48</sup>

Since the defeat of the 1967 Chinatown freeway proposal, most of the attention of preservation-conscious groups and individuals has been focussed upon Gastown. Chinatown has not commanded nearly so much attention as Gastown, probably because changes in Chinatown have been much less drastic, and because the commercial part of Chinatown was in any case an apparently thriving and vital socio-economic unit. Nonetheless, by 1971 the City Planning Department was committed to the preservation of Chinatown's historic buildings and alleyways (Figure II), and a beautification programme was planned for the area.<sup>49</sup> The need to preserve the historic architecture and the total socio-environmental character of Chinatown now appears to be widely agreed upon. "While few understand the importance and validity of the way of life in Chinatown, few would destroy it."<sup>50</sup> Further threats to the physical fabric of Chinatown would almost certainly provoke much protest, and historic district legislation should provide an ultimate safeguard for the distinctive Chinatown townscape (Plate 12).

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<sup>48</sup>See "Gastown Alley Purchase Ready for Council Vote," Province, August 28, 1971, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup>See "Gastown Party Swings Eyes To Other Areas," Province, August 17, 1971, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup>Spearing, "Chinatown...Vancouver's Heritage," p. 6.

Further evidence of a growing awareness of the historical and architectural qualities of Vancouver's townscape, and of the need to preserve these qualities, is provided by the recent concern for preserving a number of significant individual buildings in and around the downtown core. Preservationists have begun to turn their attention to significant structures beyond the limits of Gastown and Chinatown. Several important historic structures located outside of the Gastown-Chinatown historic areas have been threatened with demolition since the beginning of 1970, and the growing band of preservationists has responded to these threats in a vigorous fashion.

The debate over the future of Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver's Anglican Cathedral (Plate 13), has been particularly controversial. The cathedral is situated at one of the major intersections of downtown Vancouver (see Figure I), and it possesses one of the most economically-valuable sites in the city. With dwindling congregations and diminishing revenues, church officials had become increasingly concerned about the future of the cathedral, and in February 1971 the church council revealed plans proposing the demolition of the existing cathedral and its replacement by a revenue-raising prestige office-tower.<sup>51</sup> The church council suggested that it would be possible to construct a smaller, more modern and more functional cathedral at the foot of the proposed office-tower,

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<sup>51</sup>See Rod Morgan, "High-Rise Seen as Only Way," Vancouver Sun, February 6, 1971, p. 29.





Plate 12: Pender Street, Chinatown. - The recessed balconies and ornate frontages give the buildings of Chinatown a distinctively Chinese appearance.

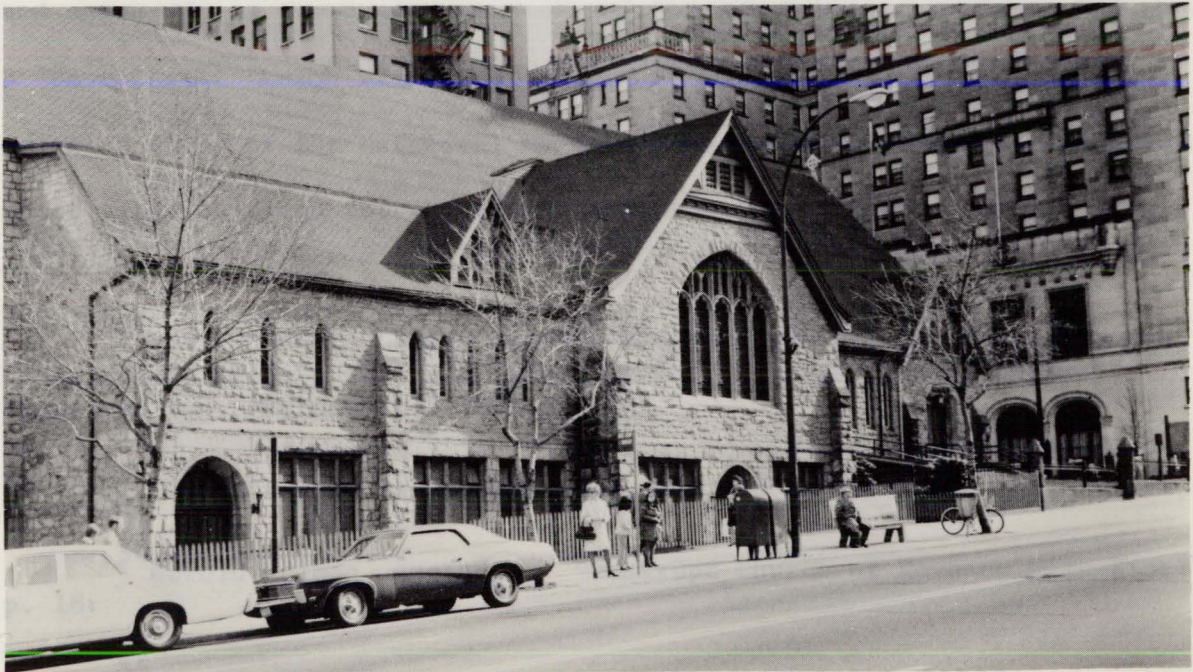


Plate 13: Christ Church Cathedral. - Located in the heart of the downtown area, this historic and architecturally significant building is currently threatened with demolition.



and that the revenues derived from the office-tower could be used to help finance expanded church activities in the downtown area.<sup>52</sup> This proposal roused the preservationists into immediate action.

Proponents of historic preservation argued that not only was Christ Church Cathedral one of the oldest buildings in Vancouver (built in 1889), possessing important historical and symbolic qualities, but that it also provided one of the finest examples of Gothic Revival architecture to be found in the city.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it was argued that the cathedral and its surroundings played a vital role as a sanctuary amidst the congestion of traffic and buildings. "The cathedral not only is an historic landmark, it is an oasis in the steel and concrete jungle. It has a psychological value for people in the downtown area that can't be measured in dollars and cents."<sup>54</sup> A group of University of British Columbia students launched a "Save Christ Church Cathedral" campaign, but on February 15th, 1971, a majority (58%) of the cathedral congregation voted in favour of the drawing up of detailed plans for the redevelopment of the cathedral site.<sup>55</sup> This

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<sup>52</sup> See "Students Launch Save-Cathedral Phone Drive," Vancouver Sun, February 13, 1971, p. 33; and "Bankrupt Church or Revenue High-Rise?", Vancouver Sun, February 13, 1971, p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> See "Students Launch Save-Cathedral Phone Drive," p. 33.

<sup>54</sup> Harold Kalman, quoted in "Bankrupt Church or Revenue High-Rise?", p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> See "Cathedral Plan," Province, March 16, 1971, p. 14.

decision encouraged dissenting members of the cathedral congregation to band together and form a "Let's Save the Cathedral" movement, and other concerned individuals and civic groups, including the Vancouver Parks Board, raised their objections to the proposed demolition. Petitions were circulated, meetings were held, and it soon became apparent to church officials that the possibility of preserving the cathedral would have to be reconsidered.<sup>56</sup>

In April 1971 a majority of the cathedral council voted in favour of the establishment of a public fund to safeguard the existence of the cathedral, thus in a way reversing the decision reached in the earlier referendum on the fate of the cathedral.<sup>57</sup> It was estimated that approximately \$500,000 would have to be raised in order to provide an endowment fund for the maintenance of the cathedral. Meanwhile, the church council awaited the architects plans for the redevelopment of the cathedral site, and by August 1971 the fate of Christ Church Cathedral was still undecided.<sup>58</sup> One thing had become clear, though, and that was that the preservationists had made their mark as a civic pressure group.

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<sup>56</sup>See "'Save the Cathedral' Group Urges Action," Vancouver Sun, March 15, 1971, p. 29; and "Positively Save Cathedral," Province, March 15, 1971, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup>"Cathedral Fund Backed in Ballot," Vancouver Sun, April 14, 1971, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup>See "Religion Today," Vancouver Sun, August 21, 1971, p. 34, and "New Bid to Save Cathedral Planned," Province, November 2, 1971, p. 7.

The debate over the future of Christ Church Cathedral was still in progress when plans were revealed for the demolition of another important downtown landmark, the Birks Building (see Figure I). In July 1971 it was proposed that the building should be demolished to make way for a \$23 million 36-storey office tower project.<sup>59</sup> The Birks Building was constructed in 1913, and because of its prominent location, its architectural qualities, and its famous clock, the building has gradually come to have symbolic values bestowed upon it. The announcement of the proposed demolition of the building was soon followed by the launching of a "Save Our Birks Building" campaign: a "S.O.B.B." committee was formed and petitions demanding the preservation of the building were circulated.<sup>60</sup> Widespread public support for the preservation of the building made itself apparent, but by August of 1971 the future of the Birks Building was still looking very precarious.

Other historic buildings in and around the downtown core have come under the scrutiny of preservationists in the past couple of years. The fate of the Canadian Pacific Railway Station, a building with important historic, architectural and symbolic qualities (constructed in 1912), has been a matter of concern for many preservationists, as have the futures of other less-imminently threatened historic buildings such as the old

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<sup>59</sup>"Fans Fight for Birks Building," Province, July 23, 1971, p. 13.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

Carnegie Library Building (perhaps better known as the "Old Museum"), the Sun Tower (see Figure II), and the Shannon Mansion.<sup>61</sup> In addition, the proposed destruction of part of the old Japanese district of Vancouver, in order to create space for a new provincial court building, has met the disapproval of some preservationists.<sup>62</sup> It has been suggested that the physical remnants of what was at one time known as "Japantown" should be preserved on account of their intrinsic historical and architectural qualities. "Japantown" provides one of the greatest clusters of historic buildings in Vancouver, many of them being more than 70 years old, and in many ways it can be regarded as a natural extension to the Gastown and Chinatown historic areas (see Figure I). It has been argued by a prominent Gastown property developer that "Japantown's" structures "...could be the basis of an historic development that would exceed what has been done in Gastown."<sup>63</sup> But in August 1971 the preservation and revitalisation of "Japantown" looked very unlikely.

Although widespread civic concern for preserving historic structures would appear to be a relatively new phenomenon in Vancouver, the

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<sup>61</sup>See for example, Dan Propp, "The Famed Shannon Estate," B.C. Motorist, January-February, 1971, pp. 16-21.

<sup>62</sup>See "Bad Case of Planning: Japanese Community Threatened," Province, August 11, 1971, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

private acquisition and restoration of old houses has been going on for a long time (see Plate 14). But the existence of old houses is often precarious, particularly if they stand in areas of high land values that are zoned for industrial or apartment development, and private restoration by no means guarantees their survival. The West End of Vancouver, an area which developed as a high status residential district during the early years of the century, used to possess the largest concentration of early Vancouver residential architecture. But since the late 1950's many of the large old houses of the West End have been demolished, usually to be replaced by high-rise apartments, and yet there has been scarcely a murmur of protest. Campaigns for the preservation of West End homes have been non-existent as yet, although it has been suggested that the well-known "Rogers' House" on Davie Street should be preserved if at all possible<sup>64</sup> (see Figure I, Plate 15). This grey stone mansion, built in 1900 by one of the early business tycoons of Vancouver, provides a marked contrast to the surrounding high-rise apartment towers; it is in excellent structural condition, and is currently used as an apartment house, but in an area of such high land values, its future is somewhat precarious.

The main concern of preservationists in Vancouver has been for the safeguarding of historic buildings, particularly those located in and around the downtown core. However, preservationists have over the years salvaged and safeguarded a wide variety of other artifacts, some of which make a

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<sup>64</sup>See "West End Mansion Hangs On," Vancouver Sun, September 19, 1969, p. 32A.



Plate 14: Old Houses in Vancouver's West End. - The West End still contains some fine old houses such as these on Robson Street which have been privately restored in recent years.



Plate 15: The Rogers' House. - This old West End mansion, once the home of a prominent Vancouver business tycoon, is now an apartment house. One wonders how much longer it can survive.



significant contribution to the Vancouver townscape. The old Royal Canadian Mounted Police schooner, the St. Roch, is the only designated National Historic Site in Vancouver (and one of the few in Western Canada).<sup>65</sup> This vessel was built in 1928 for the R.C.M.P.'s Arctic patrol service, and it was the first vessel to navigate the Northwest Passage from West to East and to complete the Passage in both directions. The St. Roch has been preserved in Vancouver since 1954 and it is now maintained in a covered dry dock within the Vancouver Maritime Museum by the National and Historic Parks Branch of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (see Figure I). Several old railway engines and an abandoned streetcar have been preserved because of their historic associations, and they symbolise the importance of these forms of transportation in the making of Vancouver. A variety of statues and monuments are scattered throughout the city, most of them commemorating important historic events and important people. An old wooden bandstand has been preserved by the City on account of its historical and architectural qualities (Figure I). More spectacular, perhaps, are the hand-carved totem poles, a large number of which are to be found in a variety of locations (most notably, in Stanley Park and at the University of British Columbia). Nonetheless, the overall spatial impact of the preservation of artifacts such as these has been relatively small.

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<sup>65</sup> See National Historic Sites Service, St. Roch (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, 1970).

Thus it is only in the last three or four years that preservation has begun to play a really significant role as a factor influencing the Vancouver townscape. Until the late 1960's preservation attempts in Vancouver had been somewhat small-scaled and few and far between, but the recent developments in Gastown, Chinatown and other parts of the city can hardly be regarded as insignificant. The campaigns for the preservation of Gastown, Chinatown and other varied landmarks clearly demonstrate that a growing number of people are concerned about both the appearance of the city and the fate of Vancouver's historic buildings. The preservation movement in Vancouver has grown to encompass groups and individuals representing a broad spectrum of interests; the City Planning Department, a variety of community organisations, architectural groups, and numerous private business concerns have joined forces with the more traditional champions of preservation such as local historical societies and antiquarians. Whilst the demolition gangs tear down the old wooden frame houses of the West End, an increasingly appreciative audience is discovering Vancouver's forgotten architectural heritage.

#### Implications and Prospects

The preservation experiences of Vancouver would seem to bear comparison with the experiences of many other North American cities. The earliest preservation attempts in Vancouver were concerned with preserving structures purely on account of their age and historical associations.



Interest in the architectural and aesthetic qualities of historic buildings did not emerge until the late 1950's, and the concept of preserving groups or districts of buildings by maintaining them in active use is a very recent development in Vancouver. Although the growth of a preservation movement in Vancouver has been slower than in other more historic North American cities, it has nonetheless gone through very similar evolutionary phases.

If Vancouver has lagged behind older North American cities in the application of new preservation methods (such as historic district zoning, and architectural control laws), this is not surprising when one takes into consideration the age of the city and its oldest buildings. Compared with cities such as Boston and Philadelphia, there is a scarcity of buildings that can by any stretch of the imagination be considered "historic", and the architectural quality of Vancouver's oldest buildings is hardly internationally acclaimed. But in the local and regional context Vancouver possesses many buildings that might be considered to be of historical significance (because of their age relative to other buildings, and because of their associations with locally and regionally famous persons or events) or of architectural importance (because of their intrinsic architectural qualities, and because of their contribution to streetscapes and townscapes). A building such as Christ Church Cathedral would probably go unnoticed in Boston or Montreal, but in the context of Vancouver it is a major historic building possessing distinctive architectural characteristics, and thus one can argue with some validity that its demolition should

not be taken lightly.

As in most other North American cities, the greatest number of historic buildings are to be found in the central areas of Vancouver, particularly in those areas peripheral to the downtown core that have somehow managed to escape the impact of the construction boom that has transformed other sections of the city in the past few years. The largest concentrations of Vancouver's early buildings are to be found in Gastown and Chinatown, the historic nuclei of Vancouver. David Spearing, a Vancouver architect, suggests that some of the buildings of Gastown "are architectural masterpieces, while others are strong eclectic expressions in a new architecture - the architecture of the West Coast,"<sup>66</sup> but he implies that the total townscape is worth more than any individual part: "Collectively, the buildings are an expression of our early heritage... collectively, they create an area unparalleled in North America for richness and potential."<sup>67</sup> And architectural historian Harold Kalman argues that "Vancouver is fortunate in retaining so much of its Victorian core. Entire blocks built before 1910 survive relatively intact, and each assumes a character of its own...Within less than a square mile one discovers so many varied representatives of Canada's earlier architectural history."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>David N. Spearing, "Architecture of Gastown," in Gastown Revisited, ed. by Elizabeth O'Kiely (Vancouver: The Community Arts Council, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Harold Kalman, "Architecture of Gastown," in Gastown Revisited, ed. by Elizabeth O'Kiely (Vancouver: The Community Arts Council, 1970), p. 9.

With a growing number of people beginning to understand the potentialities of historic area preservation, it is perhaps not too surprising that Gastown and Chinatown have attracted so much attention in the last few years.

Recent experiences in Gastown in particular have clearly demonstrated the compatibility of historic preservation and commercial revitalisation, a phenomenon that has been observed in recent years in many other North American cities.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it would seem likely that large financial investments in the restoration and renovation of existing buildings, and the closely related rising land values, will help safeguard the future of Gastown's townscape just as effectively as historic district zoning, although the latter is needed to control the exterior appearances of the buildings. Furthermore, it would seem that the revitalisation of Gastown has done much to encourage public concern for the preservation of historic buildings not just in Gastown, but in other parts of the city as well. It is hard to believe that the proposal to demolish Christ Church Cathedral would have created so much public furore had it been put forward say in the early 1960's, before preservation had become a popular concept in Vancouver.

The main achievements of the preservation movement in Vancouver so far have been to increase the general awareness of the historic and architectural qualities of Vancouver's townscape, to demonstrate the potentialities of

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<sup>69</sup>See Robert L. Montague, III, and Tony P. Wrenn, Planning for Preservation (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, November 1964).

preservation action, to facilitate the enactment of protective legislation and beautification projects, and to encourage the private restoration of buildings of historic and architectural interest. However, it is still too early to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the preservation movement in Vancouver, and it would be extremely difficult to assess its actual physical impact; one can, though, find many old buildings in various parts of the city that have been restored in recent years, and in the Gastown area several threatened buildings have already been reprieved on account of their historical and architectural qualities. Indeed, it can be argued with some validity that preservationists have played a major role in ensuring the survival of the historic townscapes of Gastown and Chinatown.

Looking into the future, it would seem that preservation is likely to play an increasingly important role in Vancouver. The City Planning Department is now committed to the preservation and restoration of Gastown and Chinatown, and its beautification projects should soon enhance the visual appearance of the two areas. Furthermore, the enforcement of historic district legislation should provide an ultimate safeguard on the survival of these two areas. The commercial revitalisation of the historic core areas of Vancouver looks likely to continue for some time. Gastown in particular has received a great deal of publicity since 1969, and it has rapidly become a major tourist attraction as well as being a developing entertainment and luxury shopping centre. Chinatown is a thriving cultural entity, and seems likely to remain so. Thus Gastown and Chinatown can be preserved as vital living communities as opposed to sterile museums.

It would also seem likely that the cultural value of Vancouver's historic buildings will increase as the city ages. Buildings such as Christ Church Cathedral and districts such as Gastown may not seem very "historic" at the present time, but the safeguarding of buildings and districts such as these should guarantee their survival for many years to come. Already, the historic districts of Gastown and Chinatown provide a marked contrast in form and atmosphere to the concrete and glass boxes and sprawling suburbs that characterise so much of Vancouver. One of the most attractive qualities of both Gastown and Chinatown is that both areas are human-oriented and pedestrian-scaled districts. If the North American City continues to develop along the lines it has followed for the past few decades, the survival of distinctive human-scaled, pedestrian oases will become all the more important. The survival of important individual landmarks will be equally important. With the passage of time, appreciation of the historic and architectural qualities of Vancouver's older buildings should increase considerably.

✓ The current concern for the preservation of important landmarks in the downtown area is a clear indication of the growing influence of historical and architectural preservation in Vancouver. One can expect that as Vancouver ages, buildings and districts in other parts of the city are likely to have symbolic values bestowed upon them, and as Vancouver grows in size, and as the older buildings become obsolescent and non-functional, pressures to demolish these buildings will increase. But it would seem likely that pressures to preserve the more important of these aged buildings

will also increase. Thus with the passage of time and with changing circumstances, the preservation of structures in other parts of the city may well become increasingly commonplace,<sup>70</sup> although the primary focii of attention for preservationists in Vancouver will probably continue to be the historic core areas of Gastown and Chinatown as these are the areas possessing the greatest concentrations of early Vancouver buildings.

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<sup>70</sup>There is already clear evidence of a growing concern for the future of significant buildings outside of the downtown core and its immediate periphery. The fate of the Shannon Mansion in Kerrisdale has been a matter of conjecture for several years, and suggestions have recently been put forward that the City should preserve a Tudor-style mansion on the Point Grey Waterfront. See John Kirkwood, "What Price for House With a Past," Province, June 15, 1971, p. 5.

CHAPTER V  
PERSPECTIVES

Summary ✓

Although speculative development and rapid morphological changes have traditionally characterised the North American City, thereby encouraging an apparent indifference to architectural and aesthetic quality, a preservation movement has nonetheless long been at work fighting to safeguard those buildings and districts that have been perceived to be of historical and architectural merit. Early preservation attempts were primarily concerned with preserving buildings associated with famous persons or famous events, and as such buildings were few and far between, the impact of the preservation movement on North American townscapes remained small for a long time. In this initial phase, preservationists were somewhat negative in their outlook, and they concentrated on converting historic buildings into museums that provided inspiration for the visitor. However, after 1910 the scope of preservation began to broaden; attention was given for the first time to the idea of preserving buildings by maintaining them in active use, and increasingly preservationists began to take into consideration the architectural and aesthetic qualities of buildings.

This widening of the scope of preservation activity was accelerated in the late 1920's with the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, the project that pioneered and popularized the concept of preserving large groups of buildings possessing architectural and historical qualities.

By the mid-1930's Charleston and New Orleans had become the first North American cities to enact historic district legislation, and restored and reconstructed historic "villages" were beginning to appear in many parts of the United States, following the example of Williamsburg. The gradual widening of the scope of preservation was accompanied by a broadening of the base of the preservation movement, and by the introduction of a variety of legislative and economic techniques and methods aimed at facilitating the preservation of historic buildings.

The last two decades have witnessed a great boom in the development of the North American preservation movement. This boom is demonstrated most markedly by the way in which numerous communities throughout the United States and Canada have in recent years set about preserving their historic districts; this phenomenon is to be observed not only in the architecturally rich and more historic cities of the longer-settled regions of North America, but also in comparatively young cities in which one would not really expect preservation to play an important role. This recent upsurge of interest in preserving historic buildings is a reflection of a growing concern for the quality of the urban environment and of a growing awareness of the architectural and historical qualities of North American cities, but it has also been spurred on by the increasing number of threats to the survival of historic buildings and districts. The development of a North American preservation movement is essentially a response to the potential and actual destruction of buildings and districts of historical and architectural significance. Although the successes of North American preservationists have been many,



the failures have been even more frequent, and thus the value of those buildings that have been saved is growing all the time.

Whereas a hundred years ago the only justification for preserving a threatened building was that it had associations with a famous person or famous events, today there are many valid arguments for preservation. The patriotic, sentimental and nostalgic arguments for preservation are still frequently expressed and still exert much influence, but they have been joined on an equal footing by architectural and aesthetic justifications for preservation. Furthermore, the more practical economic arguments for preservation have been particularly influential in encouraging the business sector and local government to support preservation programmes. The realisation that preservation can in many instances make economic sense is today one of the most powerful arguments for preserving historic buildings.

The main reasons for demolishing buildings of historic and architectural interest are that they are in poor physical condition, that they are technologically obsolete and unable to adapt to new uses, that they fail to live up to the economic potential of the sites they occupy, and that the cost of preservation is too great. The question of adaptability is a key one in determining the future of an historic building; old houses can easily be adapted to house a variety of activities, but obsolete factories and railway stations offer little scope for conversion, unless they are to be turned into museums. The number of museums that any community can support is obviously very limited, and in any case it would appear that the most effective way of preserving both individual and groups of historic buildings is to maintain them as vital

living parts of a community. Furthermore, although "Disneyland-type" reconstructed historic villages can play an important educational role in certain circumstances, it would seem much wiser to utilise existing historic and architectural resources within North American cities rather than to build imitations and fake reconstructions. Authentic restoration would in most situations seem to be the most desirable course of action, although in younger cities that possess a scarcity of genuine high-quality architectural features, the Ghirardelli Square type of preservation-development offers many possibilities.

Today many possible preservation techniques can be utilised for safeguarding historic buildings. Though the private acquisition of historic buildings has for a long time provided the mainstay of North American preservation efforts, large-scale preservation projects are heavily dependent on public support and finance. Fortunately for the preservation movement, local, regional and federal governments have become increasingly involved with preserving historic buildings, and are responsible for many of the preservation programmes in operation in North American cities at the present time. The preservation method that has had the greatest impact on North American townscapes has been that of historic district legislation, the enforcement of which can control demolitions and developments within a designated historic district. However, in assessing the overall success of historic district preservation one needs to carefully consider the social implications of restoring and renovating old buildings, and the long-term effects of "freezing" large sections of a city at a certain stage of development. Ability to generate and absorb innovations and changes is a characteristic of all

great cities, and thus one can argue that the preservation of large expanses of a city's townscape can be detrimental to its future development. However, if used selectively and intelligently it would appear that preservation can be a very positive force helping to generate and maintain a more stimulating and aesthetically-pleasing environment.

Vancouver's preservation experiences compare closely with the experiences of many other North American cities. Although the development of a preservation movement may have been slower here than elsewhere, it has nonetheless gone through more or less the same evolutionary stages. The past few years have witnessed both a rapid growth in concern for the quality of the Vancouver environment and an increasing awareness of local architectural quality, and this has been reflected in the recent enthusiasm for preserving outstanding local historic buildings. The current concern for preserving historic districts in and around the original urban core is, as has been shown, very much in step with recent developments in numerous other cities, and the rapid commercial revival of Gastown provides yet another example of the compatibility of historic preservation and commercial interests. Problems and conflicts over the future of important individual landmarks in the downtown area have arisen in Vancouver in the last few years, and the growing band of preservationists is beginning to emerge as an influential force in the Vancouver scene.

Vancouver's experiences in the field of historic and architectural preservation do in fact bring to light many of the trends and problems that have made themselves apparent in other North American cities, and, furthermore, they provide further evidence of the fact that preservation

can play an important role even in relatively young North American cities. As age is relative, so too is historic and architectural quality. In the local and regional context cities such as Vancouver possess many elements of architectural and historical significance, the potentialities of which are becoming increasingly understood.

It seems likely that the preservation of historic and architectural elements will become an even more important concept in the future North American City. Perhaps urban preservation can be regarded as a desperate attempt to hold on to those rapidly disappearing vestiges of a human-oriented, as opposed to machine-oriented, city. In this age of new urban forms, vast sprawling megalopolises, and endless suburbia, there seems to be a growing hunger for qualities of the traditional city. The recent revival of numerous historic districts, the preservation of countless individual buildings, and the creation and reconstruction of many museum villages, suggests a hunger for a quality of life and an inter-related quality of environment that is sadly missing in the exploding suburbias. The preservation of historic districts, and of significant individual buildings in the central city, would seem to be a counter-force to the many pressures working in favour of the destruction of the traditional city. As the forces of destruction grow stronger within the North American City, so too will the cries of a growing army of preservationists.

#### Research Possibilities

A number of possibilities for further research emerge from this study. In the wider field of the study of urban form, it would seem that

there are many possibilities for geographers. The urban geographer should be giving more attention to the built element or townscape of towns and cities, and with a small amount of architectural training he would be well equipped to do so. The analysis of the character of townscapes, and the measurement of townscape quality, are problems that could beneficially be tackled by the geographer. The turnover rate of buildings in different parts of a city is another problem that merits attention from geographers.

In the field of historic and architectural preservation itself, there is much scope for further research. There is a relative scarcity of literature on the development of the North American preservation movement, and on the diffusion of preservation philosophy and practice. The only comprehensive work on the development of the preservation movement is that by Hosmer<sup>1</sup>, and even that only traces events as far as 1930, and it is concerned purely with the United States, not with Canada. Thus there is much scope for detailed work on the development of the North American preservation movement since 1930; an enormous amount has happened since then. Writings on the development of preservation in Canada are particularly scarce, and more comprehensive research in this area would seem desirable. The work of the U. S. National Trust for Historic Preservation, and of the Historic American Buildings Survey, appears to be well documented, but there is a lack of information available on Canadian counterparts such as the Historic Sites Service and the Historic Sites and

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<sup>1</sup>Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg (New York: Putnam, 1965).

Monuments Board. In addition, there would seem to be scope for detailed research on the evolution of preservation philosophy and practice in individual North American cities, particularly those in which preservation has played an important role for many years (e.g. Boston, New Orleans and Washington D.C.). There would also seem to be potential for research on regional variations in such things as attitudes toward preservation and the implementation of preservation programmes. The philosophy behind preservation activity has so far been somewhat neglected, and it warrants further attention particularly if one is to adequately understand the continual changes in the scope and nature of preservation activity.

✓ The more practical effects of preservation merit greater exploration. The social, economic and physical implications of preserving large portions of cities are at present little understood, and as the concept of historic area preservation continues to grow in popularity, there would seem to be a pressing need for more consideration to be given to such matters as the influence of area preservation on future urban development, and its effects on resident population. The geographer in particular could make a worthwhile contribution to research on the desirability and consequences of enacting historic district legislation. In addition, more attention should be given to deriving effective alternative methods of preserving historic buildings, and to determining the most desirable course of action for any given situation. As preservation exerts a growing influence on the appearance and form of the North American City, more extensive research seems essential.

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