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NAPC is seeking volunteers to help advance its mission of providing education and technical assistance to local preservationists, particularly those involved in the work of local preservation commissions. Volunteers may serve on a variety of committees and in other capacities that take advantage of their individual skills and experiences. Editorial and production work on The Alliance Review, membership recruitment and retention, resources development, education programs and technical assistance are just a few of the possibilities. Join us today to make a difference in the future of preservation by contacting NAPC at 757-802-4141 or director@napcommissions.org.
In this Issue

BY J. TODD SCOTT, THE ALLIANCE REVIEW EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

This issue covers a variety of topics, as we had planned to make this the FORUM preview issue for our biennial conference in Tacoma in July. As of this writing, NAPC is continuing to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and will be making an announcement very soon about the upcoming conference. Since we were focused on Tacoma for this issue, we’re highlighting a couple of items specific to that city, one on the heavy use of wood in the built environment in the Pacific Northwest, and one on the inherent problems of building with masonry in that seismically active region. We’re exploring the restoration of wall signage and murals on both coasts – Mooresville, North Carolina and Los Angeles – and getting an update on the impacts of recent tornados on Nashville’s historic districts.

Jacqueline Drayer takes a look at the dilemma associated with buildings that can’t be saved and whether we should salvage their architectural elements while Betsy Bradley makes a case for better community outreach. And our regular features include online tools for modernists, a spotlight on The Cultural Landscape Foundation, and a volunteer profile from South Carolina.

On a more somber note, in this issue we also pay tribute to George Bernard (Bernie) Callan, Jr., NAPC’s founder and first Board Chair. Bernie passed away in February after devoting more than half of his 88 years to historic preservation and volunteer service on countless boards and commissions. We owe Bernie a debt of gratitude for his efforts to establish NAPC in the early 1980s and are working to find ways to honor his legacy.
In Memoriam: Bernie Callan

By Cory Kegerise, Chair, NAPC Board of Directors

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is mourning the loss of and celebrating the life of George Bernard (Bernie) Callan, Jr., the organization’s founder and first Board Chair. Bernie was a lifelong resident of Frederick, Maryland and devoted more than half of his life to historic preservation as an active and committed volunteer. He was a leader in numerous organizations in his home state up until his death, including the Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission, Frederick County Landmarks Foundation, Maryland Association of Historic District Commissions, and the Maryland Historical Trust Board of Trustees.

Following the establishment of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program in 1980, Bernie led the charge to create a national organization to provide training and educational resources for preservation boards and commissions and serve as an advocate for their needs at the Federal level. In 1983, while serving as Chair of the Frederick (City) Historic District Commission, he organized a meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, of representatives from other commissions across the country. What emerged from that meeting was the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, and Bernie was elected the first Chairman of the Board.

Bernie was a tireless, unflinching, and unassuming advocate for historic preservation, especially at the local level. He believed, unequivocally, that historic places and strong municipal policies and citizen commissions to steward them, were critical to a community’s health and economic vitality. He began his life selling wholesale auto parts in downtown Frederick, but in the 1950s turned his attention to real estate in the historic core of the city because he saw the economic potential. He was quick to tell you that he was first and foremost a businessman and he believed in preservation because it was good for business. In 1984 he told a U.S. Senate Committee about the importance of funding for State Historic Preservation Offices:

“As a businessman I always have to look at the bottom line and the return on my investment. Last year you invested $25 million in historic preservation. That brought about an investment of over $1.8 billion in historic preservation Tax Act properties. Gentlemen, the return on that investment is fantastic. But the real return on that investment is in the saving of not just buildings but communities. Saving our heritage so that we can have a past to build on for a future.”

I had the honor of knowing and working with Bernie and remain in awe of his commitment to his community and his service to the causes he cared
about. He was a kind and gentle man who went about his work with great skill, savvy, and humility and his absence is sure to leave big holes to fill for the many organizations he touched during his life. I am thankful Bernie had the foresight and know-how to create NAPC and am humbled to be among those carrying on his legacy.

Bernie Callan received the Distinguished Preservation Medal from the Daughters of the American Revolution in 2015 for his historic preservation work in Frederick. He is shown at Schifferstadt, one of the city’s preservation success stories, where he is a volunteer docent.

Credit: Vicki Birenberg

Figure 1

Credit: Bill Green, staff photographer for the Frederick News-Post
Salvage City: Recycling History One Object at a Time

By Jacqueline Drayer

Reclaimed materials permeate Philadelphia’s built environment. Philadelphia’s Magic Gardens may be the city’s best-known example and hosted Translations, an exhibition of artwork by Martha Clippinger, until November 10, 2019. But the creative use of reclaimed materials in the city is not limited to South Street. Both historically and in recent years, salvaged and cast-off materials have appeared in iconic locations throughout Philadelphia.

The city boasts an embarrassment of riches in reclaimed building materials. Market Street Bridge is ornamented with four of the 22 freestanding eagles recovered from New York City’s Penn Station. The Barnes Foundation’s wood flooring was salvaged from the Coney Island Boardwalk. Lombard Central Presbyterian Church brought elements from its former Lombard Street building to the Quaker meeting house it acquired on Powelton Avenue. Lokal Hotel’s Northern Liberties location features salvaged wood floors.

While artist Martha Clippinger’s work does not draw directly from Philadelphia salvage, she uses a similarly diverse array of found materials. “I’m interested in the histories of my materials. Some I know, like family members’ clothes that I incorporate into my quilts, while others, such as the scraps of wood used to make painted constructions, may only hint at their former lives,” she said. Clippinger uses salvage because, “It’s the inherent imperfections of my reclaimed and found materials that spark my imagination and contribute to the works’ character, but it’s also resourceful, utilizing more waste than it creates.”

Her show at Philadelphia’s Magic Gardens featured more than two dozen brightly colored wood, textile, and mixed media pieces defined by the use of geometric designs and graphic shapes. The works include woven rugs, ceramics, and repurposed wood. Many were made in collaboration with Mexican artisans and artistic partners including Licha Gonzalez Ruiz and Agustin Contreras Lopez. Collaboration seems to define the repurposing of salvage materials, whether by artists or architects.
Reusing building materials in art and architecture has a long, global history. The practice dates at least to late antiquity, when the Latin term spolia, or spoils, referred to the practice of using building stone or decorative art in new buildings and monuments. “Historically, and even today, this was and is done for both practical and symbolic reasons,” said Jeff Goldstein, principal of the Philadelphia-based architecture firm DIGSAU.

The example of Lombard Central Presbyterian Church balances these rationales. Aaron Wunsch, associate professor of historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, noted that, “One interesting pattern is the longstanding tendency of churches to incorporate parts of the congregation’s earlier buildings. This seems especially pronounced in local African American churches.” Churches that emphasize their community and history and want to avoid costly duplication of specific building or religious features are thus logical reusers of their own building materials.

So too are governments, that may wish to preserve certain ideas of national or regional history, even if they destroy it in its most tangible form (i.e. Penn Station’s eagles). Contemporary businesses also benefit from the aura of elegance, permanence, or sentimentality conveyed by historic materials, not to mention the Instagram-friendly aesthetic of old meets new like Lokal Hotel.

These examples point to the difficult balancing act of dealing with architectural salvage. On the one hand, it creates the opportunity for interesting interior decor, architectural ornamentation, and sustainably using existing building materials. On the other hand, salvage is not a substitute for or equivalent to historic preservation. More often it is the result of the decision not to preserve a site.

No one understands this like those who work in the salvage business. “I find reuse very natural and wish there was more of it,” said Bob Beaty, who has owned and worked for companies behind the salvaged boardwalk for the Barnes Foundation and Oyster House’s repurposed furnishings. Today he owns Beaty American and says that his clients...
include homeowners, interior designers, and restaurants. Most of his product comes from buildings that were constructed between the 18th and early 20th centuries.

Philadelphia is home to at least half a dozen salvage companies, each with their own specialties. Philadelphia Salvage Company will build custom items using its stock. ReStore offers affordable furnishings with its proceeds funding the construction of Habitat for Humanity houses. Provenance features a diverse mix of building items and quirky collectibles. In the wake of 2018’s record number of demolitions in Philadelphia, Wunsch says increased amounts of salvage would make sense, although he cannot say for certain.

On the design side, Goldstein says that the challenge is finding appropriate materials to reuse. As with any project that seeks to thoughtfully use historic components, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions here, which is exactly the point. When Goldstein’s firm was designing a house in rural Delaware, the team benefitted from learning that a nearby barn was being razed. “The rustic barnwood turned out to be the best possible solution, adding an authentic connection to the vernacular for an otherwise modern house.”

The best outcome of architectural salvage is new life for building features that never had a chance and enticing art and architecture for residents. The darker side is disinvestment in historic preservation and the invasion of pointless barn doors into suburban homes à la HGTV. Spolia is also confusing for those without an intimate familiarity with historic buildings. Any guide of Roman Empire ruins, or historic house that underwent multiple phases of development, is accustomed to the question, “Is this original?”

Maybe this process of education, fraught and confusing as it can be, is ultimately the highest calling for old building elements. Whether you call
them spoils, salvage, or reused materials, these items become translators of history. Just a few precious features from a once-whole building can be used to interpret the past, while simultaneously taking on new meaning in the present, ideally in a context that includes many more intact historic buildings. From an act of destruction comes the possibility for understanding.

Provenance Philadelphia, an architectural salvage company based in Olde Kensington, acquired these 125-year-old spires before St. Bonaventure Roman Catholic Church was demolished in 2013.

A refinisher at Philadelphia Salvage Company puts a final coat of polyurethane on a large, reclaimed door.
Saving Religious Properties: Holy Rosary Church

By Jennifer Mortensen

Holy Rosary Church in Tacoma, built by German Catholic immigrants who wanted to hear sermons in their own language, was originally established in 1891 with the construction of a simple wooden church built by largely volunteer labor. With the growth of the congregation and rising concerns about the safety of the original church, services were shifted to the adjacent school auditorium in 1912 for almost nine years to make way for planning, fund-raising, and construction of the present Gothic Revival style church. The cornerstone was laid on May 30, 1920, with the formal dedication following the next year on November 13, 1921.

The church was designed by C. Frank Mahon of Lundberg & Mahon of Tacoma, who himself was a member of Holy Rosary. Lundberg & Mahon was among the more prominent architectural firms in the south Puget Sound region while in practice from 1913 to 1923, and Holy Rosary is considered the firm’s most notable design. In addition to its architectural merit, Holy Rosary’s significance is also due in part to its prominent place in the Tacoma skyline. The church is located at the terminus of Tacoma Avenue, a major north/south corridor, and is highly visible from Interstate 5. The church was also one of the earliest City of Tacoma Landmarks when it was designated in 1975.

Until recently, the church remained in continuous use as a worship space thanks to many renovation projects undertaken and funded by the parish. Most notably, the parish undertook extensive repair and restoration work on the church and school over several years beginning in 1972; the church steeple was sheathed in copper, replacing the leaking asbestos shingles in 1994; and restoration work was undertaken on the stained-glass windows in 1998 thanks to an anonymous donor in memory of her parents.

In the fall of 2018, a chunk of plaster fell from the ceiling into the choir loft. Due to safety concerns, services were moved to the adjacent school building auditorium and the church building was shuttered and fenced off. The Seattle Archdiocese, the building’s owner, undertook an assessment of the building, announcing in August
2019 that the church would be demolished due to the high cost of rehabilitation. The Archdiocese’s assessment determined that $2.5 million was needed to reoccupy the church, an additional $7 million would address all structural issues, and another $8 million, bringing the total to about $18 million, would complete a full seismic retrofit and upgrade all building systems.

Meanwhile, earlier in 2019, community members concerned about the future of the church formed the non-profit group, Save Tacoma’s Landmark Church (STLC), to raise awareness and funds to repair and restore Holy Rosary. Since the demolition was announced, the local community in Tacoma has exploded with support for saving the church. STLC has capitalized on this energy and raised funding through awareness campaigns and a wide variety of events from a classic film series at the Blue Mouse to spaghetti dinners.

Over the past year, Save Tacoma’s Landmark Church raised over $400,000 in cash and pledges, and in December of 2019, STLC announced that they received an additional $1 million pledge. The pledge, from the Jack and Angela Connelly Family Foundation, consists of a $500,000 direct donation and a pledge of an additional $500,000 that will match all donations made up to August 31, 2020. Should the matching gift total succeed, the total amount in donations and pledges raised by STLC would exceed $1.9 million.

Most recently, STLC hosted a gala dinner and auction on January 18 at the Connelly Center at Bellarmine Preparatory School in Tacoma in support of Holy Rosary. Tickets to the event sold out in mid-December, and Tacoma showed up in a big way for Holy Rosary. In addition to raising over $150,000 toward rehabilitation, it was at the gala that the Washington Trust was proud to stand with STLC and announce that the church would be listed as one of Washington’s Most Endangered Places.
The Washington Trust hosted a joint event with STLC in February, a “heartbomb” to show the love for Holy Rosary. A heartbomb is a fun and creative way to bring people together and raise awareness about places that matter. Attendees brought a variety of homemade valentines for a big group photo.

A 1923 aerial view of Tacoma prominently featuring the newly completed Holy Rosary on the lower right.
Rear view of Holy Rosary Church.

Stained glass and the organ from the interior of Holy Rosary.
Interior of Holy Rosary Church.

Credit: Courtesy of a Holy Rosary parishioner

Heartbomb event at Holy Rosary in February.

Credit: Courtesy of Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.
TOOLS FOR THE ON-LINE PRESERVATIONIST: The US Modernist Library

The US Modernist Library website warns visitors: “Highly Addictive!” If you’re a modernism aficionado, you too may find yourself spending hours upon hours with this research tool.

What it is: A collection of (mostly) architecture magazines that document twentieth century architecture in the U.S. Although there are gaps in coverage (which organizers are working to fill), you can see full issues of such gems as Architectural Forum, Architectural Record, region-specific journals like The Pacific Coast Architect, the Midwestern Keith’s Magazine, and a number of California-based architectural publications. The website boasts 2.6 million downloadable pages.

Access: There is a handy search function where you can enter a general term or do a more specific query. For example, a search on “Tacoma” brought up a 1964 article about a house designed by architect Mary Lund Davis, photos of Tacoma’s Thornwood Castle, an article on schools and city planning illustrating the Tacoma High School and much more. More specific terms may yield exactly what you are looking for. Full issues of the magazines can be downloaded as PDFs.

Uses: General research about property types, architects, developers, architectural trends, etc.; research for National Register nominations; property-specific information and photographs useful for preservation projects; information about building materials.

Website: www.usmodernist.org
Historic Wall Signs Preserve Mooresville’s Past

By Tim Brown

Located about thirty miles north of Charlotte, North Carolina near Lake Norman, Mooresville has grown to a population of more than 40,000 residents, but the town had humble beginnings. In 1856, a local farmer by the name of John Franklin Moore embraced the railroad that was placed on his land, setting up a depot and encouraging other residents to help establish a small village, known as Moore’s Siding. The Civil War put a damper on the developments of Moore’s Siding, however, with the railroads track being removed to aid the Confederate efforts in Virginia and the village’s growth was stifled.

After the war was over and the tracks were returned, Moore’s Siding slowly began to prosper once again, thanks in part to a decision led by John Franklin Moore, who saw the need for the village to incorporate into a town in order to recover from the economic despair of the Reconstruction Era. The town was incorporated as Mooresville in 1873, and the return of the railroad bolstered recovery throughout Mooresville, a pivotal event in 1884 that profoundly shaped the town into a regional trading and textile manufacturing center.

Mr. Moore also helped to establish the first brick making factory in Mooresville, which built some of the first brick buildings on Main Street. Consequently, a commercial district of brick storefronts took shape along Main and Broad Streets, adjacent to the railroad corridor. Rail access ultimately influenced construction of new businesses, such as mercantile shops, restaurants, cotton and linseed oil gins, granaries, a library, a local school system, and the first Town Hall building. Wanting to preserve its rich history, in 1980, historically significant commercial and adjoining residential areas in Mooresville were listed in the National Register. The commercial component was locally designated as the Mooresville Commercial Core National Register Historic District in 2013.

Today, Mooresville’s historic downtown still embodies the Railroad Era vernacular that typified commercial architecture in small and mid-size communities of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the idea of keeping that era alive for
A close-up shot of the completely restored Kelly Clothing wall sign on Broad Street. Kelly Clothing began in Mooresville in 1911, and quickly became a staple for fine men’s clothing.

residents and visitors alike, the Town of Mooresville recently completed a restoration project worthy of national attention from Main Street advocates and history enthusiasts alike. The project was a joint collaborative effort between the Town’s Historic Preservation Commission and its Beautification Committee, with funding from Mooresville’s Board of Commissioners. Their common goal was to restore painted wall signs that were once commonplace during Mooresville’s Railroad Era heyday. Several of the downtown buildings that face the railroad tracks along Main and Broad Streets had painted wall signs that advertised historic local business and goods that were previously all within easy walking distance of the Mooresville Depot, much like contemporary billboards. These wall signs contribute to the defining character of Mooresville’s Downtown historic district, transcending their conventional advertising roles of decades ago to become icons. The intrinsic merit of these signs, as well as their contribution to the overall character of the town, made their restoration an important undertaking.

The uptick in historic wall sign restoration can be credited in part to a renewed interest in downtown historic districts. As more communities focus on spotlighting their historic downtowns, wall sign restoration is one means to bring back that sense of nostalgia. Following the appearance of the first Coca-Cola wall sign in Cartersville, Georgia in 1894, the popularity of wall signs as an advertising tool grew dramatically. Wall signs advertised a wide variety of products, goods and services, often flashing distinctive characters and slogans.

As they began to appear in other locales, several Coca-Cola specturals, like the one at the corner of Center and Broad Streets, adorned the walls of commercial businesses in Mooresville. Property
owners would often rent wall space for painting these advertising signs. As many manufacturers and products gained national and regional prominence, companies such as Selz, Schwab & Company, of Chicago, embraced wall sign advertising particularly to expand brand popularity of its boots and shoes beyond the northern Midwest. Selz remained a major footwear company throughout the 1920s, before falling victim to the crippling Great Depression. Mooresville’s distinctive Selz “Royal Blue Shoes” sign was likely painted over, following the shoe company’s demise, to make way for a Coca-Cola advertisement on the same wall.

Another former sign boasted the local Kelly Clothing Company, which began in 1911, with owner C.L. Kelly, Sr. opening his namesake store at the corner of East Moore Avenue and North Main Street. The store offered name brand men’s clothing, hats and shoes in Downtown Mooresville. In 1953, Kelly’s son, Bubba, took over the store, which then relocated to the 200 block of North Main Street. Bubba operated the store until he retired in 1988, when it was taken over by his longtime protégé, Johnny Smith, who renamed the store John Franklin, Ltd. Additionally, the Goodman Drug sign’s origins stems from George Caldwell Goodman, who joined a thriving drug store business started by Dr. John McLelland and Dr. Samuel Stevenson in 1877.

The town engaged Brushcan Custom Murals, of Asheville, North Carolina, to carefully preserve six severely weathered wall signs, often called “ghost signs.” These signs, including the Selz Shoes, Coca-Cola, and Mills Department Store wall signs on South Broad Street, as well as the Kelly Clothing Company, Goodman Drugs Free Parking, and
es, and offer free signage for that company. In exchange, the companies would then use the rest of that wall for large and colorful advertisements. “One could even surmise that a mill town was an ideal location for such a sign, due to its localized and saturated audience,” said Allred. “In many ways, this is one of the only forms of two-dimensional public art that we can point to from this time frame.” He added that although it was not originally meant to be that, looking back, one might observe that it added a certain amount of color and design to the aesthetic of town’s appearance.

“From a personal point of view, I find the layered existence of multiple advertisements, spanning many time periods, to be the most beautiful and nostalgic part,” he said. “It’s like peeling back layers of time to reveal the history, and we are very excited to be a part of this.” Allred described the unique restoration process and techniques that Brushcan has developed to restore these wall signs as a way to “fine tune” the amount of restoration done, so as to capture an appearance that remains “beautifully subtle and faded” and retains their historic design, while still becoming more legible and preserved for the future. “We start by studying the wall and identifying as much of the original layout as possible,” Allred said. “If there are multiple signs painted on top of each other, we find out which came first, and how the different paint colors helped preserve one another.” It

Jeremy Russell and Scott Allred are the co-owners of Brushcan Custom Murals. Russell and Allred might be considered modern-day equivalents of ‘wall dogs,’ the Railroad Era vernacular for sign painters, who plied their trade from town to town in all sorts of weather, perched precariously on scaffolding or suspended from the roof of a building. Together, they bring a combined forty-five years of professional experience in fine art, mural, sign, and scenic painting as well as graphic design. Russell and Allred spent a total of 155 hours over seventeen days, starting in early June, to carefully restore the wall signs.

Scott Allred explained that typically, a company that distributed on a national level, like Coke or Selz Shoes, would approach small-town businesses, and offer free signage for that company. In exchange, the companies would then use the rest of that wall for large and colorful advertisements. “One could even surmise that a mill town was an ideal location for such a sign, due to its localized and saturated audience,” said Allred. “In many ways, this is one of the only forms of two-dimensional public art that we can point to from this time frame.” He added that although it was not originally meant to be that, looking back, one might observe that it added a certain amount of color and design to the aesthetic of town’s appearance.

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different families of colors, we recreate how paint really ages.” When the desired level of restoration is achieved, “the sign has the charm of an original, but it’s now preserved,” he said. The final step is to apply a special varnish to add additional protection from the sun.

Brett Sturm, Restoration Specialist with The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, State Historic Preservation office, also provided his perspective on the historic wall sign restoration project. “From a preservationist’s standpoint, this project shines for the level of thought and sensitivity invested in deciding how the ghost signs could best be conserved,” he said. “Instead of simply repainting them to make them look new again, the conservators stabilized the existing paint layers then artfully overpainted them, blending in new colors to render the faded signs more legible.” Sturm added that in the case of the Kelly’s Clothing sign, the Town of Mooresville went as far as during this initial step in the restoration process that Russell and Allred discovered the original text of Goodman Drugs parking sign which had faded almost beyond recognition.

In order to accurately capture the original appearance of the signs, Allred and Russell generate images of the sign derived from advertisements found in archival local newspapers and phone books. After documenting the original wall sign, the signs are first carefully cleaned, then sealed, with clear acrylic urethane to prevent further weathering of the original paint on the masonry wall. “At Brushcan Murals, we have a love for historic design … the crossover between old public wall advertisements and murals has made us fond admirers of these ‘ghost signs,’” said Allred. “This can be conflicting when asked to restore them, as some of the beauty is in how subtle and faded they are. Painting these signs to look brand new can be a little overpowering and cause them to lose their original charm.”

That’s why the next steps in the process, Allred explains, are a custom mix of paint with exterior professional grade acrylic to match what is on the wall, usually subtle and very muted colors. “The paint is slowly layered and applied in a variety of unconventional techniques, as we always keep in mind how a real exterior sign ages (i.e., how and where the paint typically stays on a wall, decades later, as well as where it doesn’t),” he said. “Using multiple layers of very slightly different families of colors, we recreate how paint really ages.” When the desired level of restoration is achieved, “the sign has the charm of an original, but it’s now preserved,” he said. The final step is to apply a special varnish to add additional protection from the sun.

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Another added sign in downtown is Golden Girl Cola.

as to consult old local newspaper ads to ensure the restored logo was an accurate match to the original. “After 155 hours of labor, the result is both nuanced and beautiful — signs that show their age, telling the story of Mooresville’s historic downtown,” he said. “To restoration-minded folks like us here at the State Historic Preservation Office, perhaps the best part is that the signs are protected for the future, sealed with a UV-inhibiting varnish so that they can continue to communicate with Mooresville locals and visitors for decades to come.” Downtown Mooresville now has a total of nine historic wall signs that have been restored, and plans for future restorations are being considered.

This article was originally featured as a Main Street America blog post in July 2019.
Hidden Murals of the Ebell Club of Los Angeles

By Caroline Labiner

In 1933, up-and-coming artist Maxine Albro painted four sibyls in the garden portico of the Ebell Club of Los Angeles. Within two years they were overpainted after a startling vote of the membership. The portico is still there with hints of black and turquoise paint underneath several layers of beige, but the physical condition of hidden murals has not been investigated or explored. When the subject of restoration comes up, heated discussions still arise among current club members and leaders. Should the frescos be explored and restored?

The Club was founded in the 1890s when even women of some means did not routinely attend college. The middle and upper-middle class members of the Ebell were devoted to improving themselves through education and service, following the principles of Adrian Ebell. The Ebell Club has occupied their National Register building since they commissioned it from Sumner Hunt in 1927. At one point they had a membership of over 4000 Los Angeles women. The Club has continually occupied their Wilshire Boulevard Clubhouse since then, continuing to adhere to their motto “I will find a way or make one – I serve.” The elegant Clubhouse and the attached 1200-person theatre are used for Club functions as well as filming, weddings, and event and performance rentals.

The building is a full city block long with a grade change of about twelve feet from front to rear. Henry Harwood Hewitt was commissioned to design a late Mediterranean Revival style clubhouse – the third in the Club’s history. It is cast in place, board formed concrete on many surfaces; stucco on others. When Hewitt died, Hunt’s firm, Hunt & Burns took over the work. The style he developed in the finish drawings is more completely Italian Renaissance, with a meandering circulation which changes as the grade changes. The Clubhouse has three primary spaces on the first floor and matching ones above on the second floor (with a
mezzanine between) arranged around a central garden with a pergola opposite the dining room veranda, a loggia with the frescoes on the north and the theatre stagehouse on the south.

The frescoes are/were in a central gathering space – they would have been visible for almost all events – Los Angeles’ style being to use indoor and outdoor spaces equally. The interiors are remarkably intact, with few major modifications done in its 93-year history. Though there have been several restoration projects (and more planned), little of significance has been done extravagantly. A historic structure report was completed for the building in 2013, and the non-profit Club raises significant amounts of money for its Rest Cottage Association and its scholarship fund. Preservation of the building has not been funded generously, but rather on an as-needed basis.

Murals representing four Roman sibyls were commissioned by the Club from a remarkable painter, Maxine Albro, who had been working in California on private commissions for several years. The Los Angeles Times, covering the painting of the murals, called her a “diminutive Californian,” because although she was born in Iowa she was raised in San Francisco. She studied at the California School of Fine Arts, at the Art Student League in New York, at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris and learned to paint frescoes in Mexico after completing her
formal education. Just after finishing the Ebell work, she began her most famous commission, the murals in Coit Tower in San Francisco, as part of the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project. Today her work can be found in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum of Modern Art, National Gallery of Art, National Museum of the American Indian, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and in various galleries and private collections.

There were abundant articles about the sibyls and the controversy at the time of their painting and subsequent destruction in many California newspapers from San Francisco to Riverside. It seems to have been a struggle between the older and younger members within the Club with only 300 of the 3000 members voting to destroy the murals and 200 voting to preserve them. From the newspaper articles at the time it seems as if the issue was the primitive quality of the work, not the subject or their clothing. Her father was of Spanish heritage and she spent a lot of time working in Mexico, and her...
The Delphian Sibyl prior to being covered.
work elevated a primitive aesthetic which was seen as fresh and modern.

The sibyls were particularly appropriate images for a woman’s club. They are ancient oracles and prophetesses – the Sistine Chapel has five of the most famous images. They have been described as frenzied women from whose lips the god speaks. The Roman sibyls Albro painted are particularly appropriate for the Italianate Ebell. She painted the Cumaean Sibyl who was the guide to the underworld and got smaller and smaller as she aged until only her voice was left; the Delphian Sibyl became a wandering voice that brought tidings of the future wrapped in dark riddles; the Erythraean Sibyl (Cassandra) who gave answers that were related to the quality of the question; and the Roman Sibyl is shown with a book and predicted a tall, handsome and well put together Constantine and the success of Christianity.

There has often been this tension in southern California arts between the local, the modest and the aspirational. The same feelings are present now. Living comfortably with the handmade ethnic and folk arts as compared with the glamorous Hollywood Regency style influenced by Tony Duquette and gilded bamboo. The sibyl murals are not prized for their wit and charm.

On April 3, 1935 The Los Angeles Times published “Throng Visit Ebell Loggia for “Just One Look” as Murals Face Day of Doom.” According to The Times, “It is like bidding farewell to a friend whom you never expect to see again. They are soon to be destroyed, absolutely destroyed according to the statement of Mrs. Samuel Cary Dunlap, president… Fortunately the cost of destruction will be a mere trifle compared to the payment for the murals. That was in the neighborhood of $400. It was not a set price but an agreeable arrangement whereby the artist received her expenses and the costs of material. … At any rate, with the playful Mexican style paintings gone, the original dignified quiet of the loggia will return. A welcome peace will pervade the club home after the two year controversy and lovers of classical art will again enjoy the Ebell’s famed salon without
disturbance of modern frescoes just outside the windows." The Times sums it up "Majority sentiment is said to frown on these fresh and lovely works as being too garish for the dignified buildings."

Rumors still fly that the painted-over murals are salacious or subversive. One member swears that directions were given to scratch out the murals before being over painted. Some have called them "heinous." Even biographical texts say the reason the women objected was because the sibyls were nude (they weren’t). We are lucky to have contemporary photographs (one hand-colored) because the president at the time was prescient in expecting that tastes might change. The Los Angeles Times reported that the ire was so great that the discussion was not just if plywood should be used to cover the murals but if they should be sandblasted so as never to be recovered. The report at the time said that lye to bleach and three layers of oil paint were applied.

Three years ago, David Myers and Leslie Rainer from the Getty Conservation Institute were gracious enough to visit the Ebell to see if there was anything to look at beyond the whitewashed portico. They had both been intimately involved with the remarkable Siqueiros mural restoration project on Olvera Street in Los Angeles. Alan White from GB Geotechnics USA visited six months later with an eye to doing an infrared analysis of the walls. Though the price to begin an exploration was modest, there was serious resistance within the club. Few members had even seen the photographs or knew the story. They thought that there was strong evidence that the murals were still there – the shadows of the triangular shapes of the Cumaean and Delphian sibyls are visibly carved into the plaster. Flaking paint at the base of the walls between the windows shows blues, greens and blacks. Despite the reports of the destruction, it is possible that the contractors just cut corners and applied a coat of paint.

The process to discover what is there would be to do an infrared photograph, to see if the black outlines were there, and then a test square with a restorer to see what might be there still. And to get the go ahead from the Board to do so. Despite the understanding that knowing the condition of the murals does not mean that one must restore them, there is a strong resistance still to doing the modest work to see what is there. The Special Events office says that weddings will not like to have the backdrop of the sibyls; members seem to still feel that the character of the work being Mexican and modest is at odds with the Italianate nature of the building. Proponents of discovering what still exists beneath the beige paint (I include myself) think that the murals would open the Ebell to better telling the story of its place in Los Angeles history – and the story of the way Angelinos see ourselves.

1 The Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles, California, August 6, 1933, page 28
2 Other clubs were named Ebell founded with the same principles, but are not related.
3 http://www.magcloud.com/guestpass/023210c6a4c5429aa0a56025d8ce7f91?webviewer=False
4 Sullivan Goss, An American Gallery, Maxine Albrow Biography
5 The Los Angeles Times, March 17, 1935, pg. 9
World of Wood, Clear as Glass VII

By Michael Sullivan

Back to the glass plate negatives from the 1920’s with their many questions and answers, their keen observations of a time a century ago and the hidden stories within. The holy grail in this ongoing examination of the 120 or so glass plate negatives is the identity of the photographer and maybe something about his biography. That secret still eludes me, but this group of images follow a distinct pathway into the forest and a world of wood.

In the first two photos the photographer is following an older couple and two young women. From their fancy automobile and stylish clothes, they are people of means and the muddy tires on the car suggest they are wandering into unfamiliar territory. More miles of paved roads were built in Washington State during the 1920’s than any decade since but these adventurers are clearly not on one of them. Sitting in the car, they seem to be visiting the run-down plank house and collapsing pole barn behind them, much more interested in having their picture taken than exploring the homestead ruins. Everything behind them seems carved from the woods.

In photo 2, they are in the woods, the girls wrapped in car blankets like they don’t want to get too far from mechanical modernity. It’s the trees that are telling a story in this photo. The group is posed on the root flare of a mammoth Western Red Cedar and just behind them is a stump of a first growth conifer. The older woman is gently holding the branch of new growth tree like it was one of the family. I’m fairly certain that the photographer is a young man, a friend or relative, and I suspect from the feathers and headbands that the girls are playfully posing as native Americans. The edge of the Pacific Northwest forests, even after the ancient Douglas firs, cedars and hemlocks were cut by hand and second growth was well under way, still had a primeval quality, a sense of powerful natural systems at work.
Where cities and farms took the place of forests, the cut and milled trees became the stuff of most buildings, houses, barns, fences and furniture. During the early 20th century Tacoma lived off cutting lumber, milling doors and windows and manufacturing furniture. The construction material quality of old growth VG Douglas fir for framing, cedar for roofing and hardwoods for woodwork was some of the best in the world. Carpentry was a profession for many, but it was a basic skill for almost everybody. Outside the city, a family could buy framing lumber, milled drop siding for the exterior, hardwood for floors, windows in double hung frames with glass, doors and hinges and cedar shingles all in a package. In 1920 a simple house like this might cost $250 and come with plans. All you need are tools and time.

If fancy wasn’t your cup of tea, a raw lumber house could be assembled with simple stud wall framing covered by board and batten siding, minimal windows and a shallow shed roof porch. Even the picket fence was wood. And simpler yet was a board and batten plank shed with no foundation, home-made fixed pane windows, a wood stove inside and wood bin out. And in the city, where you had street addresses, indoor porcelain plumbing and next-door neighbors, the houses were still made of conifer wood. The decorative shingles might be scalloped, the porch supports tapered or turned by a craftsman and the double hung windows might support large glass panes without mullions but for the most part you lived in a hand-made wooden building.
A century ago the built environment was shaped in renewable material. We literally grew our cities, towns and buildings from native materials that expended a life cycle creating oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide and then find a second chapter providing shelter and utility. It is fascinating to look at how we shaped and assembled the structures in our world a century ago using locally sourced renewable materials and skilled labor.

Today we build uniformly in concrete, steel and metals, petroleum-based plastics and PVCs, and chemically derived adhesives, sealants and mastic resins. Seven percent of the carbon emitted into the atmosphere is estimated to come from the production of concrete used for construction, paving and even siding materials that replace wood. Vinyl used for window frames, ceiling panels, interior and exterior siding, flooring and casework is produced from petrochemicals, and most of the vinyl/PVC/plastic building materials are mass produced and transported by motor vehicle to the Pacific Northwest. 45% of the carbon emission in the U.S. comes from petroleum and construction related materials and their transportation contribute immensely to the
problem. Sorry about the rant but keeping what’s useful, repairable and reusable in the built environment is just common sense. The photographs are a good reminder.

And finally this last tantalizing clue in the mystery. I think the young man reclined with the cap is the same fellow in my bicycle group of images. I didn’t notice it before but there were clues in the earlier photos suggesting the camera belonged to him. So I’m headed back to that group of images and the library. Things might be coming into focus.

For more in the Clear as Glass series, visit www.TacomaHistory.live.
Recovery Continues in Nashville’s Historic Districts Following Tornado

By Robin Ziegler and Phil Thomason

In the early morning hours of March 3, a category F3 tornado touched down in Nashville causing several deaths and destruction through some of the city’s historic districts. The worst destruction occurred in the Germantown and East Nashville Historic Districts which are both National Register and Historic Overlay districts. The day after the tornado the staff of the city’s Metro Historical and Historic Zoning Commissions began their assessment of the damage and assistance to residents and property owners. Two properties in Germantown were destroyed and six more were significantly damaged. East Nashville was impacted worse with twelve properties destroyed and another forty-two significantly damaged. Altogether almost 300 properties in the two historic districts had major or minor impacts from the tornado.

In response to this level of damage, the Historic Zoning Commission staff issued expedited Preservation Permits to allow for properties to be razed or repaired. The staff also provided consultation on best practices for rehabilitation and restoration. Since the tornado, property owners in the historic districts have dealt with delays in hiring contractors and delays in insurance claims. One of the key findings of the staff is how many property owners are under-insured. In a number of cases the insurance payout will not be adequate to finance the needed repairs to return a property back to its original appearance. Also, Nashville is in the midst of a building boom and most contractors were already booked when the tornado occurred. This has left a gap that disreputable contractors are taking advantage of and undertaking work without receiving Building or Preservation Permits.
Odd Fellows Hall, built in 1889.

Odd Fellows Hall after the tornado.
House in Germantown Historic District damaged beyond repair.

This historic property lost its façade but will be rebuilt.

Damage in the East Nashville Historic District.

Row of houses damaged in the East Nashville Historic District.

The Historic Zoning Commission staff continues to provide assistance throughout the rest of the year to preserve and rehabilitate as many properties as possible. This assistance includes working with the city’s codes department to encourage rehabilitation rather than demolition and advocacy with insurance companies to promote repair rather than replacement. Nashville is just one of many communities across the country in recent years which has experienced natural disasters such as flooding, fires, earthquakes and tornados. Historic preservation commissions are encouraged to create disaster preparedness and recovery plans if these are not already in place. As part of its assistance to commissions, the NAPC is currently working on a Community Disaster Training module which will be available to members within the next year.
What If We Thought Further About Our Roles As Experts As We Engage in Community Outreach

By Betsy Bradley

Many historic preservationists are thinking more about reducing the distinction between experts and community members and this sensitivity to we and they thinking can only be a positive addition to how we frame our outreach projects.

Asking rather than telling is a first step in authentic community engagement. Many CLG (Certified Local Government) projects using Historic Preservation Fund grants hold public meetings at the beginning and end of the project period. I recently realized that I used such meetings to only tell people what was going to be done and then what had been done. Yet asking rather than telling could make these meetings more useful in aligning a project with community interests and involving people with the gathering of information. However, as I’ve shifted to this approach, I find that asking people to tell us what is important to them about a neighborhood is not sufficient if the questions are too broad or don’t incorporate how they think about where they live.

We need to work on this approach, borrowing from others. We might use visual preference assessment, asking for photographs of an area as a means of assessing which places are particularly valued, or placing dots on a map for favorite places in a neighborhood are ways to start asking.

Going a step further to involving community members in decision making about a project – sharing authority – is a thorny issue with the uncertainties of “what if’s” and “slippery slopes.” There is a difference between asking for information and incorporating community members into decision making. We often resist the latter because we feel that, as experts, we understand what can and cannot be done, what our practices make easy to
accomplish and what would be a “heavy lift,” and frankly, often have in mind what the project should consist of before it starts.

These are our more defendable thoughts, because others include dismissal of an unusual approach as “they just don’t understand how this works” rather than a legitimate alternative. Someone needs to make decisions after consultation; projects need leaders. Yet Laurajane Smith cautions us in the Uses of Heritage that historic preservationists generally reinforce our expertise and authority as we “manage” the input of others in ways that leave our way of administering heritage unchanged. No one wants to be managed in this way.

So how do we authentically involve members of the community in what we do – rather than just explain to them what we do and could do? I took a stab at this with a CLG project, a survey of Mid-Century Modern resources. At the point when we needed to identify a select few buildings for additional study, I tried to incorporate the interested public into this decision making. We posted flyers featuring buildings that were documented at a certain level at a public meeting. We gave attendees a small number of stickers and asked them to place them on buildings that they thought were important for Defining the Era – not the only ones that could be considered significant, but ones to start with. People studied the flyers, chatted about the buildings and placed their dots. Some buildings had many dots and were clearly thought to be important; many others had a few dots. We developed the list of buildings for further study using the ones the interested public identified and rounded out the list to include all important building types and to represent many areas of the city.

Outreach should be another form of inviting participants in. One way to incorporate the ideas of community members that are different from those of our expert way of doing things is to think of a range of effective practices rather than best practices, because we need to remember to ask best for whom? Surely there are alternative means to a broader set of goals. Let us know how you are implementing these alternatives to practice and more effectively engaging the community.
Tell us a little bit about the Mount Pleasant Historical Commission

The Town of Mount Pleasant is a growing community located east of Charleston, South Carolina, across the Cooper River. Our commission is a seven-member volunteer board that was formed in 1989 to promote the history and culture of the town. I joined the commission in March 2019 after a seeing an advertised open seat on the board and wanted to learn more about my new town. I have worked alongside my fellow commissioners and our staff liaison, Kate Dolan, on some exciting projects this year. The commission receives an annual stipend from the Accommodations Tax funds that supports our educational and outreach programs. Unlike our town’s Old Village Historical Commission, for example, we do not have any regulatory functions. We have committees dedicated to tourism and outreach, education, special collections, and historical markers.

How did you get into the preservation field?

I have been interested in history for as long as I can remember, growing up a stone’s throw from Old Town Alexandria, Virginia. I graduated in 2008 from the University of Virginia’s School of Architecture with a degree in Architectural History and went on to Ball State University where I received a Master’s in Historic Preservation. I worked for the National Park Service in both Washington, D.C. and Seattle, Washington with funding from the National Council for Preservation Education. While having kids, I worked part-time at the King County Historic Preservation Program and 4Culture in Seattle. Since then, my family and I have relocated back to the East Coast and found a home in Mount Pleasant. I’ve enjoyed meeting new people and understanding our town’s past - from the storied Sweetgrass Basket Makers, to the area plantations that once dominated the landscape. Very recently, I was fortunate enough to start a new job as Advancement Coordinator for the Preservation Society of Charleston, our nation’s first preservation organization. While I will continue my volunteer position on the commission, this new experience will surely lend itself to an even greater understanding of the whole Lowcountry and the wider efforts to preserve it.

Can you give us some background on your program’s activities?

The Mount Pleasant Historical Commission has been involved in erecting and maintaining 70 historical markers through the town. We approve the language and facilitate the unveiling ceremonies, seeking community input along the way. The Town of Mount Pleasant also dedicated a new town hall complex in 2017, which now includes a dedicated history room and special collections. We are in the midst of soliciting donations and inventorying our collection and are hoping to start a new oral history program in the coming months. Our largest undertaking is our Black History Month program, which involves planning and promoting town events throughout the month of February.
What are the biggest challenges currently facing your program?

One of our challenges is increasing awareness and exposure. We are always looking for more followers, more subscribers, more app downloads, more visitors, and more engagement. Diversifying our outreach virtually through our app, social media and email, and in-person through events and programming, we hope to expand our impact. Another challenge is growth management. In the past few years, the Town of Mount Pleasant has exploded with development, as has the entire Charleston Lowcountry. There are several areas, especially African American Settlement Communities, which are slowly being swallowed up by new development. Just last year, Laing School, the last segregated school east of the Cooper River, was torn down to make room for a Home Depot. Many of our new residents, especially those who are not native to the area, are unaware that it is likely that their

map with historic sites, stories and tours. We also launched an Instagram page (@MtPleasantHistory) to connect with our many residents and visitors virtually and share our events and history.

This year, we had a very well-attended Black History Month program, which included musical performers, a panel discussion of black women in broadcasting, a photography exhibition by Civil Rights activist Cecil Williams, a presentation of African Americans in the fields of science and technology by Boeing executive Joan Robinson Berry, and more. Our special collections committee spearheaded a research project on Edmunds Jenkins, an African American Civil War veteran and an elected town marshal. On the horizon for next year is a collaborative project called Mount Pleasant Way, a proposed network of interconnected paths in town. It is our hope that we can promote some of the town’s storied history into this project.

What are the most notable successes/accomplishments of your program recently?

Recently, our program installed near field communications (NFC) technology onto our historic markers. Residents and visitors can now simply touch their phones to the markers and link to new information on our app and website. Our app, Mount Pleasant Historical, features an interactive

hosted primarily in African American churches. We also coordinate educational lectures in schools and in the public library throughout the year and select a winner of our annual Cresco Award for excellence in historic preservation. Lastly, we research and distribute a Quick Fact Friday every week on our social media and email list that includes fun and engaging historical tidbits about our town. We encourage community involvement in all our initiatives and hold monthly public meetings.

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house is built upon land that was once an area plantation.

Lastly, we have the challenge of living in Charleston’s shadow. Even though Charleston is a hotspot of tourism, it is often difficult to attract tourists to Mount Pleasant, as visitors often use our town simply to pass between downtown Charleston and the island beaches. Our town is as much a part of the early development of South Carolina, the Revolutionary War, Civil War and Reconstruction era as Charleston, but our historic resources have largely not survived to the same extent as Charleston. Our Old Village Historic District is still intact, as well as a few area plantations, but many things have been lost to time and development. It is our hope to save and document as much as our town’s past as we can moving forward and to try and attract more visitors to hear our stories.

How is your program equipped to deal with these challenges? Have there been recent changes to funding/staffing with your program? We have not had a funding increase since our commission was founded, even though our population has grown exponentially. We also are all volunteers, as our town does not have dedicated historic preservation staff or any local preservation non-profits. It is our goal to become stakeholders in town business and work with neighborhoods, residents and organizations to promote our past. We are looking into grant opportunities for new projects moving forward to increase and diversify our funding. Developing new programming, hosting educational events and playing a role in growth management are ways we can start to change the tide.

What kinds of partnerships do you have with other preservation organizations or other municipal organizations? We partner with the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, which has documented and researched significant Revolutionary War fortifications in Mount Pleasant. Recently, the SCBPT helped develop interpretative signage as a part of the development agreements in several new neighborhoods in Mount Pleasant. The signage discusses the history of Fort Palmetto, a remnant Confederate battery still visible in the marsh, and Christ Church Line, a long defensive line conceived by General Robert E. Lee and constructed using slave labor through modern-day Mount Pleasant.

We also have worked closely with local groups and want to continue collaborating as much as possible – it takes a village to save a village! Luckily, Mount Pleasant has many knowledgeable and passionate residents who take its heritage to heart. Our goal is to engage and enlist as many of them as we can to record our history, while also contributing to the vibrancy and livability of this great town.
The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization “that provides people with the ability to see, understand and value landscape architecture and its practitioners, in the way many people have learned to do with buildings and their designers.” Cultural landscapes, according to TCLF, “are landscapes that have been affected, influenced, or shaped by human involvement” and they can be organized into four categories: designed landscapes, ethnographic landscapes, historic sites, and vernacular landscapes. These places reveal insights into the origins and development of our country as well as the relationship between humans and the natural world. TCLF focuses on education and public engagement to bring
visibility to our shared landscape heritage, to identify its value, and to empower its stewards. In other words, TCLF “connects people to places,” an effective motto.

TCLF created three core programs to carry out their mission. What’s Out There® is a searchable, easy to navigate database aimed at raising public awareness of the diversity and interconnectedness of our shared designed landscape heritage. Known to be North America’s largest and most exhaustive database of cultural landscapes, What’s Out There® can be searched by landscape name, locale, designer, type and style. What’s Out There® Weekends, an extension of the database, is a series of free interpretive tours led by expert guides that draw people out into their own communities to experience the landscapes they see every day but from a different lens.

The Pioneers of American Landscape Design® initiative is an ongoing series that chronicles the lives and careers of landscape designers, visionaries who made a significant impact on the designed American landscape. The multimedia format of the series, which includes biographical profiles, videotaped and transcribed oral histories, tours, and publications, is intended to promote active sharing of information. Lastly, Landslide®

is an ongoing collection of landscapes and landscape features that are threatened and at-risk. The goal is to encourage informed, community-based stewardship decisions. According to TCLF, it is everyone’s responsibility to protect and interpret these cultural landscapes as they improve our quality of life and deepen our sense of place and identity.

Founded by Charles A. Birnbaum in 1998, The Cultural Landscape Foundation is comprised of leadership, staff, a Board of Directors, and Stewardship Council. The people behind TCLF have combined expertise in the areas of nonprofit administration, community engagement, public relations, and marketing with backgrounds in landscape architecture, design, resource stewardship, research and teaching. The diversity of experience at TCLF enables the organization to offer a wide range of programming, which also includes international conferences, traveling exhibitions, and scholarly books. To learn more about The Cultural Landscape Foundation, visit their website at: www.tclf.org.
ILLINOIS
Last year, one of the Princeton Historic Preservation Commission's main focuses was the city's brick street preservation plan, meant to keep record of the city's brick streets with a goal to preserve and maintain what's left of them. The city kept bricks torn from Euclid Avenue during a reconstruction project and plans to reuse them in various restoration projects around the city in the future. Some of them have already been used to restore a walkway. The plan lays out procedures for preserving brick streets in Princeton. One of those is that current brick streets should be patched with brick when underground maintenance is done, however, restoration in the future will focus on drivability and transportation safety first. The street department will be encouraged to establish routine maintenance of the brick streets. (Bureau County Republican)

IOWA
The Ottumwa Historic Preservation Commission has been holding neighborhood meetings in each of the city's historic districts, stemming from a desire by members of the Commission to share information with the residents of Ottumwa's historic districts and to get residents involved in the work of historic preservation. Members of the Commission and city staff have been providing information and history, as well as explaining the benefits of living in a historic district. Residents of the district have been encouraged to bring photographs and memorabilia celebrating the neighborhood and will have an opportunity to share memories and stories. The Ottumwa Historic Preservation Commission was established in 1990. (KYOU TV)

MARYLAND
Halethorpe Civic League is seeking historic designation for the former Halethorpe Colored School. The building is managed by Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, and the League would like to add it to the county's historic landmark list. Properties are added on a rolling basis to the list by the Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission. The commission added the school to its preliminary list in September. The former Halethorpe Colored School on Northeast Avenue was built in 1924, one of five schools for black students in southwestern Baltimore County prior to desegregation in 1954. Some former black schoolhouses still in existence have been turned into private residences. Others, like the Halethorpe school, were repurposed as community centers. The school was built in part by a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a national organization that seeded matching money for school buildings in states that did not provide adequate support education for black children. Black Halethorpe families also mounted pressure on school officials to build a new school, presenting officials with an $800 check for the endeavor in 1921; the school system only got on board after the entry of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The Halethorpe school was abruptly sold to private owners in 1947, who ran a nursing home there until the building was bought by the Halethorpe Civic League in 1959, according to the landmark application. The league used it to host events before Baltimore County sought to purchase it in 1968. (Baltimore Sun)

NEW JERSEY
Cape May City Council introduced a new ordinance that sets standards for property owners who desire to install solar energy systems. The action sets up a potential clash with the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which has not reviewed the new standards to ensure they will not jeopardize the city's historic landmark status. Although the council was advised to wait for HPC input, the ordinance was still introduced. The HPC will be asked to submit its review of the proposed standards before a final vote to adopt them in coming weeks. (Cape May County Herald)

PENNSYLVANIA
For over a decade, the paint-chipped home where jazz legend John Coltrane once lived and honed his skills has sat in a state of disrepair on North 33rd Street in Philadelphia. Now it is listed on Preservation Pennsylvania’s 2020 roster of at-risk sites. “Preservation Pennsylvania hopes to work with the owners and supporters in the local preservation and jazz communities to find a way forward for this property,” said Julia Chain, the organization’s associate director. The designation doesn’t come with money or the promise of preservation but gives visibility and awareness to the site, said Faye Anderson, activist and director of All That Philly Jazz, a public history project. The Coltrane House has been on Philadelphia’s Register of Historic Places since 1985, and has marker dedicated to the “pioneering African-
American jazz musician, composer, saxophonist.” In 1999, it became a National Historic Landmark. Neither title has kept the vacant home from falling into disrepair. Coltrane was in his mid-20s when he bought the three-story rowhouse in 1952. He lived in the home while he was featured on Miles Davis’ ‘Round About Midnight album in 1957 and produced Blue Train the following year. It was also here that he signed his first record contract, kicked his heroin addiction, and composed tracks for the groundbreaking album Giant Steps. He’d go on to play with the greats of the day — Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, and Dizzy Gillespie — before starting his own quartet. After Coltrane left Philadelphia for the bright lights and soulful sounds of New York City in 1958, his cousin Mary Lyerly Alexander maintained his legacy in Philly. Founding the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society, “Cousin Mary” hosted a series of backyard concerts at the home, introducing children across the city to jazz. The current owner has started a 501(c)3 nonprofit in an effort to rehab the landmark site. (Philadelphia Inquirer)

SOUTHER CAROLINA
Some people in Piedmont are honoring a piece of history spanning 132 years. They placed blue ribbons along the main bridge in Piedmont, honoring what used to be the historic footbridge. The footbridge was recently swept away by flooding. Anne Peden, a member of the Greenville County Historic Preservation Commission, organized the ceremony. She said it’s been tough on the community not seeing the signature bridge in its usual spot. “It was such an attraction to even outsiders and so now that footbridge is gone for them, as well, so we’re trying to support each other,” she said. The blue ribbons represent Piedmont’s traditional color. The bridge was used to connect the Greenville County side of Piedmont to the Anderson County side. Peden said she’d like to see the bridge restored. (WYFF News)

WASHINGTON
The City of Seattle and owners of the Showbox music venue recently reached an agreement to settle an ongoing lawsuit and determine the future of the building. Seattle will pay the owner $915,000 and search for a new buyer for the building. The owner filed a lawsuit in 2018 after the city council passed an ordinance rezoning the Showbox to be included in the Pike Place Market Historical District. The move by city councilors stopped plans to demolish the Showbox and put up a 44-story apartment tower in its place. In the lawsuit, attorneys claimed the rezone was illegal and sought a repeal of the ordinance and $40 million in damages and attorney fees. In July, Seattle’s Landmarks Preservation Board granted individual landmark status to the music venue, which originally opened in 1939. Seattle’s city attorney said the focus of the situation is now appropriately with the Landmarks Preservation Board, rather than trying to appeal the zoning judgment. The settlement with Seattle includes a contingent option for a third-party allied with the City to potentially purchase the property for $41.4 million, as the owner is open to considering any serious purchaser that offers fair market value. (KING5 News)

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The NAPC-L is a Google Group managed by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions to provide a professional network for preservation commission members and staff to ask questions, exchange ideas and share information. To serve as a resource during this time of change and uncertainty, NAPC is opening access to the NAPC-L to the public. This listserv is a valuable source of researchable archived topics. NAPC also encourages research initiatives and will allow surveys and other research requests to be posted on NAPC-L.

You may request to join this group by visiting the group at https://groups.google.com/d/forum/napc-l or by sending your name, organization and email address to director@napcommissions.org.
Become part of the national network of local preservation, historic district, and landmark commissions and boards of architectural review. Organized to help local preservation programs succeed through education, advocacy, and training, the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to local preservation commissions and their work. NAPC is a source of information and support for local commissions and serves as a unifying body giving them a national voice. As a member of NAPC, you will benefit from the experience and ideas of communities throughout the United States working to protect historic districts and landmarks through local legislation, education, and advocacy.

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