

NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC TRUST

POSITION PAPER

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P. Lieberman
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C. W. W. W.

The Needs and Opportunities for Historic Preservation in New York State

The Need for Historic Preservation

Ever since 1850 when the State of New York undertook to preserve Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh, the interest in historic preservation has been growing. Dedicated individuals and organizations have worked diligently and proposed plans to save other portions of our heritage, but new problems have complicated their objectives and programs.

Today, we are experiencing an era of accelerating change. With those changes that affect the lives of all of us at present come not only the pollution of air and water, the spread of asphalt, and the disappearance of green acres and sheltering woodlands but also the irreplaceable loss of historic sites and buildings. Those significant parts of our heritage give character and distinction to our communities and our State. When they have been destroyed, a part of our past is lost forever.

The forces that bring about these changes are not merely State-wide but are nation-wide and even world-wide in extent: population growth, urban sprawl, public works construction, such as highways, airports and reservoirs, and commercial and industrial expansion. All of these result from the ever-expanding developments of a technological society. These inexorable forces of change are vital to the growth of New York State. But growth will be worthless if we lose our heritage. Our growth need not be blind. We need to protect and enjoy our heritage and to preserve

the connections with the past. We need to recall our roots and the experiences of those who preceded us as we look to the future. History and destiny are interdependent.

We have our river banks, lake shores, beach fronts, hills and valleys and mountain peaks that have been our environment. Their use has changed and will continue to change, but we can hope their profile and configuration will change little. They too provide contacts with the past. We have places where events of importance in our past occurred; we have other places connected with the lives of significant individuals; we have homes, churches, forts and other buildings to provide contact with the past. They deteriorate daily or are destroyed regularly, but we need these structures to remind us of our backgrounds. We need them to know how we began and changed and developed; we need them to know where we are going and to give us pride in our heritage, some stability in the present and a sense of direction in the future.

Fortunately, the forces of conservation are growing stronger. Increasing numbers of persons are becoming more concerned about their surroundings - they have resolved not to allow our communities to become more ugly or unplanned, without beauty or history. New Yorkers, through their Legislature, have imposed controls to eliminate water and air pollution. Moreover, the State Legislature has in recent years empowered towns, villages, cities and counties "to provide for" places of historic or aesthetic importance.

This interest in and concern about the past and the acknowledgment that communities and their citizens have a responsibility to preserve

sites and structures of the past for present and future generations led to the enactment of legislation in 1966 establishing the New York State Historic Trust.

To accomplish its purposes, the New York State Historic Trust sets forth the following principles:

Objective and Scope of Historic Preservation in New York State

1. Historic sites and buildings are part of our total environment and make an irreplaceable contribution to the character and individuality of our communities and our State. Their preservation is a civic obligation for historic, educational and aesthetic, as well as for civic and social reasons.

2. The Trust recognizes the rich diversity of historic resources in New York State from simple dwellings to large estates, from archeological remains to public buildings and engineering achievements, bridges, canals, mills and factories as well as forts, churches, battlefields, schools and farms. Some may be in rural and agrarian surroundings, and others in villages, towns or cities, but all are ^{ly} ~~equally significant~~ associated with the cultural and scientific aspects of human progress, ~~parts of our cultural heritage.~~

3. The Trust recognizes that it is necessary to preserve distinctive historic districts, and even entire communities, as well as individual notable historic sites and buildings, if we are to conserve and understand communities and our State.

4. The Trust recognizes that only a few historic buildings deserve to be preserved as exhibits, but that most will and should be perpetuated by continuing to use them either for their original purpose, or for some other compatible use.

5. Historic preservation is a cooperative effort involving not only historians and architects, but also planners and lawyers, bankers and realtors, public officials and private citizens, at all levels of government and in the private sector as well.

Organization

1. The New York State Historic Trust is established to exercise leadership and provide coordination for historic preservation in the State of New York.

2. The New York State Historic Trust should, and will, work in closest cooperation with other state agencies, and, specifically, with (a) the State Council of Parks ^{and Outdoor Recreation} and the Regional Park Commissions, (b) the State Education Department, and (c) the Council on the Arts. For this purpose, all these agencies are represented on the Board of Trustees of the New York State Historic Trust. It is not the intention of the Trust to duplicate the facilities or staff of any existing agency but rather to work with them to advance historic preservation.

3. The Trust will set forth policies and programs, developed in cooperation with the ^{official} local historic sites advisory boards ^{and Regional Park Commissions}, in order to provide consistently high standards for the preservation, restoration, operation, interpretation and public use of all historic properties owned and administered by the State of New York.

4. The Trust will establish close working relations with the principal Federal agencies whose programs affect historic preservation in the State of New York, including (a) the Department of the Interior,

(b) the Department of Housing and Urban Development, (c) the General Services Administration, (d) The Department of Transportation, and (e) the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. It will also work closely with the non-Federal, but Congressionally-chartered, National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States.

5. The Trust, working through the State Education Department, will maintain liaison with the official county, city and town historians in New York State to assist in, and provide information about, historic preservation. The Trust will establish special liaison with official local landmark and historical commissions in towns and cities to cooperate on preservation surveys, projects and objectives.

Program

1. The Trust will initiate comprehensive, energetic up-to-date programs, through the Regional Park Commissions and with the ~~advice of~~ ^{official advisory} the ~~local~~ boards for historic sites to improve the preservation, restoration, interpretation, and public use of State-owned historic properties.

2. The Trust will publish criteria and will receive, evaluate, and act on proposals for additions to the system of State-owned historic properties. The Department of Education will be consulted to supply ^{technical} evaluations.

4 3. The Trust will initiate and conduct a comprehensive State-wide survey of historic sites, ^{and buildings and objects} to determine the need ^{for carrying out} ~~the~~ ^{of these historic sites buildings and objects} historic preservation in New York State and also to qualify for grants-in-aid as authorized in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Trust will prepare, based on the survey, a comprehensive State-wide

3. The Trust, authorized by law to accept gifts of historic sites or funds for historic sites and related purposes, will maintain and operate such sites and use such funds for historic site purposes in accordance with the wishes and conditions of the donors.

plan for historic preservation at all levels in New York State and will keep up-to-date that inventory based on the changing economic, educational and political needs of the State.

54. ^{sites, Buildings and ~~districts~~ as places of historic interest and will take} The Trust will designate ~~as certified State landmarks~~ ^{qualified} historic sites, buildings and districts. ^{Such action as will promote the public that meet established criteria.} It will maintain and publish a ^{recognition and appreciation of those sites} list of the sites and will provide other appropriate recognition for them.

65. The Trust will develop and set standards for a systematic program of ^{State} grants-in-aid to local, municipal historic sites projects.

76. The Trust will encourage preservation programs, projects and efforts at all levels of government as well as by individuals and by private organizations. It will sponsor local and State-wide preservation conferences, workshops and publications.

89. The Trust will take all necessary steps to establish policies and to develop programs to ^{enhance public enjoyment and to} extend the interest in, and improve the effectiveness of, historic preservation in New York State.