

FUTURE OF PRESERVATION



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ELIZABETH B. WATERS

I guess you could say preservation is in my blood. My family moved into a 200 year-old, 2 over 2 New England farmhouse with 40 acres when I was six months old. My parents named the house "Greenbrier" but my Dad always called it "the place". My parents lived on the place for 40 years. They created lawns and terraces and gardens, added a wing of bedrooms for us kids, and a wing for my grandmother when she came to live with us. We rode horses, picked blackberries and swam in the ponds at Greenbrier. Before my Dad sold the place at age 85, he put much of the land under easement to preserve what they'd worked so hard to create. So I got my preservation start early.

My more official introduction to the world of preservation came in 1979 – about ten years after the anniversaries we're celebrating today – when I went back to graduate school in urban and environmental planning. By then I was married, had three children and was becoming increasingly focused on what I could do as a person and a professional to make neighborhoods, cities and towns better places for people to live. I began to learn about historic preservation and came to believe, then as now, that historic preservation is one of the major tools we have to create livable communities.

That's my story and I know each one of you has yours – where

you came from, how you came to learn and care about preservation, environmental conservation or both, and what they mean to you. I think our own stories are our common starting point for thinking about preservation today, what it is, where it's going, and where it could go if we apply our creativity and energy to the challenges ahead.

So much has happened in the 40 years of preservation we're celebrating today. I'm only going to mention a few of the highlights so we can spend most of our time this morning on the present and the future.

On a national level we passed the Historic Preservation Act, established the National Register of Historic Places and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. We established preservation tax credits, transportation enhancement funds and the Save America's Treasures program. We have seen the National Trust and the National Park Service broaden the movement to embrace cultural diversity, women's history, and sacred places from earlier civilizations.

In New Jersey you've created the Historic Sites Council and the New Jersey Historic Trust. Your State Historic Preservation office has listed hundreds of sites and districts on the state and national registers. You've created Preserva-

tion New Jersey and the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund. You've done more than \$50 million dollars worth of historic rehabilitation under the federal tax credit program, adopted a model rehabilitation building sub-code and a state plan that calls for the preservation of historic, cultural and scenic resources.

We've accomplished a lot in four decades and these accomplishments are our foundation. But my focus today is not on the past, it's on the present and the future.

- For the first few minutes, I want to talk about some major changes I think we need to make in how we approach historic preservation in the coming decades.
- In the second half of my remarks, I want to talk about a few of the most exciting opportunities I see to expand the horizon of what preservation can mean in the future, with the hope that my thoughts and comments will excite and energize you about what lies ahead.

I've been reassured by some of the reading I've done to prepare for this talk that I'm not alone – or as original as I'd imagined frankly – in my thoughts about the future of preservation. Many of you probably share some of these same views and it will be interesting for

us to compare notes in the discussion period that follows. So, let's get started.

What are the changes I think we have to make in how we approach preservation in the coming decades? I offer four big ones.

First, I Believe We Need to Make Some Fundamental Changes in How We Talk About Historic Preservation.

Language matters. It affects how we think about things and how we communicate about them with others. I think we've allowed our language, the language of preservation, to become too much about buildings, windows, and standards, and what is and is not allowed. Our language is too little about why preservation is important, how it connects to our core values, and why it matters in people's lives.

Historic preservation (as well as architecture and planning and everything we do that has to do with the built environment) is important not in of itself, but because it is an essential component in creating livable communities for PEOPLE to inhabit.

So—in thinking and talking about preservation-- we need to start with what matters to people.

- No one aspires to have a 2-hour commute, or live isolated from other people or from a sense of who they are and where they came from.
- People want families, friends, meaningful work, housing they can afford, safe communities that are attractive and easy to navigate.
- People want a sense of belonging and hope for the future.

We need to continue to connect historic preservation to these core values in how we talk about it and in what we do. We need to be sure our pre-eminent message is not what preservation won't let you do with your property, but how it can bring us closer to the lives we want to live.

Some have suggested that as the field became more professionally driven and the passionate amateurs stepped back, preservation naturally shifted to language more oriented to the details of getting the job done: words like "eligibility", "standards", "certified rehabilitation" and away from the language of tradition, stability, local identity and common heritage. When we say historic preservation, do people think vibrant, attractive livable communities—or do they think: that's the group that tells you what you can't do and makes things more expensive?

I believe the future of preservation lies in our ability to help others understand that what we call historic preservation is about livable communities, telling our stories, celebrating who we are, creating a world future generations will want to live in. Here in New Jersey you've made an excellent start on this as you've expanded what you do, from creating Main Street communities, to setting up a Women's History Trail, to establishing the Crossroads of the American Revolution Heritage Area, but I don't think here or at the national level we have really made the vital transformation from a field focused on saving buildings and places to one focused on what preservation can do to contribute to the quality of people's lives.

And that brings me to a second and related point about what I think we need to do as we move forward.

We Need to Make Sure that Historic Preservation is relevant to the major issues of the day.

For historic preservation to have a place at the decision-making table in New Jersey, it has to be relevant to the issues people who live in New Jersey care about in their daily lives. If we're not part of the solution to major issues, we're part of the problem.

The world is changing constantly and rapidly. It's very different than it was 40 years ago when the major preservation programs, institutions and organizations we work with today were established.

It's estimated that by 2025 there will be 400 million people in the U.S.—that's 100 million more than we have today. And who we are is changing. We're getting older and more ethnically and culturally diverse.

As the population grows and changes, it will need more and different kinds of space to live, work and recreate in. A recent study done for the Brookings Institution estimated that by 2030, half our buildings will have been built after the year 2000—think about it, that means that over the next 30 years, we will create, through development and redevelopment, as many total buildings as we already have today. But not only will we create and renovate new space, the space will be different. Empty nesters and single person households—including large numbers of elderly—will dominate future American housing markets. The needs of businesses and workers will be different. The suburban template will not meet our needs.

None of this is news to you. No one knows better than people in New Jersey how the development patterns of the last 40 years have altered the landscape. Open

space in New Jersey is disappearing at an alarming rate and New Jersey citizens struggle with the 3rd worst average commute in the country.

But what do all these changes mean for historic preservation? We have to ask ourselves: what does preservation have to contribute to the challenges presented by these changes?

- Can we use our understandings of the power of place and stories to help connect newly arrived citizens to our country? Can we help our communities embrace these new cultures and help weave them into ours?
- Can we overcome real problems associated with the cost of historic rehabilitation and make preservation a valuable way to develop more affordable housing?
- Can we build on qualities we find in our historic communities to help us design and redesign livable communities for the future?

I think we can and let's take a look at a couple of situations in which people have been successful doing this.

Gloria Rodrigues has been working since the 1970s to help poor people in San Antonio break the cycle of poverty and improve the quality of their lives. She went door to door, founded a non-profit called Avance, and offered a range of services to help people get their lives on track. In the 1990s, the growing organization needed a new home. Their first thought was a new building, but another possibility was brought to their attention. Using a variety of kinds of tax credits, help from the National Trust and every other partnership they could find, they ended up restoring an old hotel in an historic district the city has had an interest

in revitalizing for years. Avance is thriving in its new location, it's contributing to the revitalization of an historic district, and they even have their eye on another old hotel across the street for expansion.

Another example of preservation activity being made relevant to today's needs is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, a place a number of you may have visited. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum's home at 87 Orchard St. is the first preserved homestead of poor, urban, working class immigrants in this country. The museum founders might have settled for being a first class house museum, but they had relevance on their minds. In addition to the preservation and interpretation of the Orchard St. building, they use diaries of past immigrants to teach English as a second language to new immigrants arriving in their neighborhood. They have art works on their website that explore contemporary immigration experiences and they sponsor dialogues on contemporary social issues like immigration, labor and social welfare. So, they are an historic site, but they also offer services to meet the needs and concerns of their neighbors today.

As we all know, making preservation relevant is not easy. I was working with the Preservation Resource Center in New Orleans earlier this year. One of the many challenges they face is the perception that because they have always opposed the demolition of historic properties, they are an obstacle to clearing out and rebuilding neighborhoods in their devastated city. To their great credit, they're rising to the challenge. They're not only working with the city on the city-wide rebuilding plan to show how preservation can help not hinder the rebuilding, they're also working with neighborhood organizations and other non-profit groups to reach out across the country to former residents to bring them

back, realizing that—even more than preserving buildings-- bringing people back is the first thing that needs to happen to preserve their beloved city and its heritage.

So, preservation can and must be relevant, but to do this we have to be part of the regular civic processes we go through as a society to balance public goods, of which preservation is only one. We can't just preach preservation to anyone who will listen, we need to roll up our sleeves and dig in with others to make good things happen in our communities. Now to my third point.

To be successful in the 21st century, preservation needs to be pro-active, not reactive.

When I say we need to be proactive, what am I talking about? It's not enough to stay in the trenches, try to list more buildings and districts, review proposed changes and fight proposed demolition. We have to move out of our safety zone and take the lead on some of the challenges that lie ahead.

We need to seek a stronger role in the planning and decision-making processes being used to design and re-design communities today. The built environment will be altered—it always has been, it always will be. We need to continue to try to influence growth policies at the state level and we need to try to influence planning and zoning decisions at the local level so we're not left lying down in front of bulldozers because our local plans and ordinances not only allow, but encourage demolition and sprawl development.

One historic community that decided to be proactive is Hannibal Square in Winter Park, Fla. The community was founded in the early 1900s to provide housing for African American workers who were needed for the orange groves

and hotels in this winter retreat. During the 1960s, Hannibal fell on hard times and became badly deteriorated. Recently, the community has come together with a vision for combining preservation with redevelopment. They adopted development guidelines that preserve Hannibal Square's special character while allowing for commercial redevelopment, infrastructure improvements and a range of new housing types and costs. They're using land trusts and other creative financing mechanisms to make these things happen. They recently broke ground on the Hannibal Square Heritage Center, which pays tribute to the contributions of Winter Park's African American residents. In my view, this kind of comprehensive community revitalization strategy is a very exciting, pro-active approach to the future of historic preservation.

And there are plenty of other examples of pro-active preservation if we look around. You've showed a recognition of the need to be pro-active by putting "Tear Downs" on your most recent 11 Most Endangered List. This is an attempt to take a lead role in preserving one of New Jersey's greatest assets — wonderful older neighborhoods.

But there's more we must do. We must be a key part of the thinking about how to retrofit our aging suburban areas into real communities with centers, shared open space and a kind of connectivity they lack today. Revitalizing these older suburbs is going to be vital to preserving our cities and absorbing our growing population in sustainable ways and we need to help make this happen.

Preservationists also have to get out in front in thinking about what we should and should not try to preserve over the next 50 years. New Jersey has been a leader in national efforts to preserve the recent past from the Doo-Wop

architecture in Wildwood to the recent rescue of Eero Saarinen's Bell Labs facility in Holmdel. But this recent past thing is going to get tougher. Up to now we've been able to use the 50-year rule as a starting point for value, but with the amount of new building that's taken place in the last couple of decades and the accelerating pace of development today, we're going to have to revisit that. In my view the 50-year criterion will cover too much property, it will overwhelm the system and has the potential to create some real backlash.

We're the ones that need to take the lead on saying what needs to be preserved from the last 20-30 years and how to decide. If we're not proactive on this, someone else will make these decisions and we probably won't like them.

So whether it's trying to change rules, redesign communities, or revisit our language and goals, preservation must be pro-active not reactive if we're going to stay in the game.

My final thought about four major ways in which we need to change our attitude and activities to be successful as we move forward is that historic preservation must be about Persistence.

When we're working in an area like historic preservation, it's easy to get discouraged. It feels like we labor away, no one listens and we don't make any headway. I think we have to realize that historic preservation is not something we will ever "accomplish." It's a complex and evolving set of values and endeavors we must advocate for, forever. Sometimes we're successful, sometimes we're not. Sometimes we lose out to what others consider higher order values or public goods. We make headway on some things as we lose ground on others. Preservation requires persistence.

Before we get too discouraged about this, let's step back and realize that this is a characteristic we share with essentially every important cause in this country. Take race relations. A few years ago, I was at a forum on race relations in Charlottesville and expressed dismay to a senior member of the black community that we still seemed unable to close the divide between blacks and whites in our community and said it seemed to me like after all these years we hadn't made any progress. He was very quick to correct me and say, you have no idea, we've made huge progress, but of course we still have a long way to go. I think his perspective has a lot to offer us here today.

Whether our goal is to resolve racial differences, address the host of environmental challenges we face, or to integrate historic preservation into how our communities grow and change, we have to be in this for the long haul. We have to be able to see success when we achieve it and be energized by it. We also have to advocate for preservation values even at times of slow or limited progress. We need to encourage and support each other and recruit new troops so we can stay motivated and excited as we promote historic preservation as a foundation for building strong, vital communities for us, our children, and future generations.

So, if these are some of my big picture thoughts about the future of preservation, where do I think we need to place our emphasis for the next 5-10 years? What are some of the specific opportunities I see to put these new emphases into action?

Of course we need to continue to keep doing what we've been doing to identify and protect resources and to strengthen local preservation laws and Commissions. Beyond that, here in New Jersey the

two things at the top of the list – and you put them there when you developed your advocacy agenda in the fall of 2005 – are to continue to pursue a state rehabilitation tax credit, and to press really hard – as you are-- for the reauthorization of the Garden State Preservation Trust. You were one of the first states to provide this kind of sustainable funding for open space and historic preservation. Since then, many other states have joined you and you need to do everything you can to keep this pioneer program and add a state tax credit program to complement it.

But beyond the basics of resource identification and protection, leveling the playing field economically, and providing sustained funding for preservation, there are some really exciting opportunities for preservationists today and I'd like to talk briefly about three of them in particular that excite me.

First, I think we need to focus on how preservation can do more to connect with the imperative that we consume less, conserve more and get a grip on the unprecedented challenge of global warming, which if not addressed will literally swamp all of the other challenges we face.

We need to build a strong case that the preservation of historic buildings and communities is compatible with the demand to increase density, the need to minimize what some are now calling our "eco-footprint." New Jersey's state plan is an important step in trying to direct new life and economic vitality into existing cities, save open space and create a more environmentally sustainable way of living. But as you well know, moving more people into existing cities brings with it the threat of demolition of historic buildings. We need to show how preservation and density can co-exist and show

that there are ways to increase density in existing communities without sacrificing the character and scale that will keep these places desirable places to live. We need to be involved in creating policies, plans and ordinances that make this happen.

On a building, rather than a community or landscape scale, we have always known, and argued that re-use of historic buildings is a great way to conserve energy and recycle. Historic buildings were usually designed to make use of passive heating and cooling. Rehabilitating historic buildings makes use of existing infrastructure and keeps more stuff out of our landfills. We need to continue to make the case for the environmental value of traditional historic rehabilitation, but we need to do more.

We have just started to take a hard look at where preservation can and should fit into the "green architecture" movement. It isn't enough to insist that certified rehabilitations use original materials if these materials are no longer considered sustainable. We need to begin looking at the materials required to restore historic buildings – the same way responsible architects and developers are doing for new buildings – and see what changes need to be made.

Representatives of leading preservation organizations, the American Institute of Architects and the National Park Service are talking with folks at the U.S. Green Building Council about how the "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" --or LEED--Rating System can include guidelines for historic buildings so historic renovations can incorporate sustainable design principles – and maybe one day even be LEED certified.

But not everyone is waiting until standards are in place. The National Trust has recently rehabilitated a 1905 Beaux Arts style

building as a Visitor Education Center for the Lincoln Cottage, President Lincoln's summer home on the outskirts of Washington, DC. Even though no "green" guidelines were in place for historic rehabilitation, the Trust decided they wanted to incorporate as much sustainable design into the project as possible and did this by maximizing water and energy conservation, using recycled materials and segregating waste to minimize what went into the landfill.

In another example, the county office building in Charlottesville, VA, where I live, is a recycled building that was the white high school before we built a new integrated school in the 1970s. Last year the County replaced the roof of the building with a "green" roof to help manage storm-water and generate long-term energy and maintenance savings. Although it's over 50 years old, the County Office Building is not individually listed or in an historic district and no review was required. But what if it had been? Would our local Board of Architectural Review have allowed them to do this?

I think building and strengthening the connection between preservation and environmental sustainability is one of the biggest challenges and opportunities we face. We need to be aggressive in showing how preservation and higher densities have been and can be compatible. We need to work with the Green Building Council to develop guidelines for sustainable design in historic buildings, and then we need to see that those guidelines find their way into the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. If we don't do these things, it's going to become much harder for us to convince people that these buildings need to remain part of our future.

A second very exciting thing happening in this country

today that affects the values we all care about is the heritage area movement. Without a doubt it's become the most energizing and popular method of preserving large historic landscapes and the cities and towns that dot these landscapes. We need to learn from and build on this movement.

Remember what I said about the need to link historic preservation to the values of community, livability and economic vitality? I think heritage areas are so successful because they are built on the notion that large geographic areas have valuable regional identities and that preserving these identities shouldn't be a barrier to change. Heritage preservation should be a foundation and guide for change that will preserve what we value most while allowing our communities to grow in ways that will meet the needs and desires of citizens for housing, jobs, and the kinds of lives we want to live.

I've worked in various ways on the formation and management of heritage areas in Pennsylvania and Virginia and was involved with the Crossroads of the American Revolution heritage area at its earliest stages of development. These areas are all about balancing public goods. They are about working partnerships between local governments, preservation groups, tourism groups and others to guide change. In my view, they have opened the door to an inter-jurisdictional/cross interest group kind of cooperation that we have failed to achieve in other ways at the local and regional level.

It isn't chance that we've designated 37 federal heritage areas and a large number of additional state heritage areas since the program began in 1984. Over 60 million people across 28 states live in

National Heritage areas today. This concept has very broad appeal and potential way beyond what we've realized.

So, make the most of the new heritage area you have. Use it to build partnerships to promote farmland preservation, heritage tourism development and preservation based community development. Use it to get local government entities to work with each other — who knows maybe it can even spill over into the other ways in which you desperately need cooperation between these local entities — now wouldn't that be great?

The final exciting topic that I want to talk with you about briefly is using stories as a starting point to capture the hearts and minds of our growing and changing population.

I started my remarks with own my story. What mattered about Greenbrier for me was not just the physical place, which was very important. But what really mattered were the associations that place had with childhood, family, and rituals. Not everyone knows or cares about New England farmhouses, but everyone does know the meaning of home. Everyone has stories about their past—personal and cultural—and the elements in that past—distant and recent—that have meaning for them.

A core element in what it means to be a preservationist as we move forward needs to be learning more about the stories of the people we share our communities with, whether they've been there for generations or just arrived. We need to tell our stories to our families and our neighbors, we need to ask about their stories, we need to use all of our stories to build community and connectedness between us.

A book I happened on last year really drew me in and got me caught up in this potential of stories. It's called Hidden Kitchens and was written by two women who call themselves "the Kitchen Sisters". The Kitchen Sisters have been telling stories on national public radio for the past 20 years—maybe many of you know them. In their words, they "tell stories that chronicle the hidden parts of history, the traditions and rituals that people carry with them from one country to another, across one generation to the next, the vibrant, changing, and fading sounds of America. Stories told by people in their own voices, layered with the music and sound of their time and place." Doesn't that sound like preservation?

Despite their name, the stories the Kitchen Sisters had sought out weren't focused on either kitchens or food until someone got them hooked on the idea of hidden kitchens—stories about unexpected, improvised, tiny kitchen cultures in places no one ever thought to look before—which led them to look for these stories and write this book.

They open Hidden Kitchens with the story of the Foreman Grill, which it turns out has become the total extent of the kitchen for all kinds of people living on the edge, with limited means, from the person in a single room occupancy hotel to the homeless man under a bridge who strings together extension cords to fire up his "George." But many of the Kitchen Sisters' stories are about people and kitchens closely tied to historic buildings and places.

Meet Lou "The Blue" Marcelli, the 77 year old caretaker of the Dolphin Club, a swimming and rowing club that's been around since 1897 in an out of the way nook near Ghiradelli Square in San Francisco. The club has cavernous dark-paneled rooms full of hand-

crafted wooden boats and a galley kitchen where once a week Lou — who's been the commodore of the club for 35 years-- cooks supper for the old timers who sit around and talk about the old days. In this story, an historic building provides a gathering place for a mix of retired Italian, Spanish and Portuguese firemen, policemen, painters, waiters who want a place to get together, eat and tell their stories. For me it's the history of this building and the stories connected to it — past, present and future — that make me want to save it.

Another story the Kitchen Sisters tell is about the Chili Queens of San Antonio. The Chili Queens were Mexican immigrants, who from the late 1800s until the 1930s, cooked chili in their homes and sent their daughters to the plazas in old San Antonio to sell the chili on long tables, with checked cloths lit by lanterns. Townspeople joined visitors who were lured from afar by newspaper stories, to come to the plazas and buy this new spicy food from the Chili Queens. The Chili Queens were ultimately displaced but their stories remain and are part of the rich Latino heritage of this city. And that spicy chili they cooked? It's a favorite at my house and in households all around the country today.

These and the other stories in the book, from a hidden kitchen on the White Earth Indian Reservation to one in a 1890s blacksmith shop in

San Francisco, enriched my sense that stories are a very useful starting place for talking about preservation. Stories tie us together. They give places meaning. We know this of course. We've been using stories to interpret historic sites for years. But I think we've only begun to mine the powerful potential that stories hold. It's not just the stories of people from the past. It's all stories. It's my story, your story and everyone else's story we share our neighborhoods, our country, even our world with. Human stories give our buildings life and help us keep people and their lives closely tied to the places we love and want to preserve. They offer ways to make our built environment feel more like home to our newest citizens. The story of the chili queens is a story of old San Antonio, but it is also a story of immigration, family, food and community — common themes that unite us all.

We need to fully appreciate the power of stories and harness them to make the heart of historic preservation come alive for an ever-wider circle of people.

So, just to sum up the thoughts I've offered here today about what we need to do to give life to historic preservation over the next 40 years:

We need to transform the way we think and talk about preservation

so more people will come to understand that it is not the icing on the cake, it's an essential element in creating the kinds of physical and social communities we want to live in.

We need to keep preservation relevant. We need to show how it can help us tackle the major issues facing us today — things like affordable housing, urban decline and environmental sustainability — so it's part of the solution not part of the problem.

We have to be pro-active. We have to take a leadership role in the rebuilding of our cities and suburbs, in redefining what it is we need to preserve, and in creating the kinds of partnerships needed to get these important jobs done.

And we must be persistent. We need to prove to ourselves and others that we are in this for the long haul because preservation will never be accomplished, it's a forever kind of thing.

Finally, I urge you to consider the idea that the essence of what we do always has been and always will be stories. Capture the stories, cherish them, pass them on. It's not buildings per se that matter, it's the people, the lives and the stories that inhabit these buildings — past, present and future — that give them life. If we remember that, we can't go far wrong. Thank you.