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Historic Preservation: A Comparative Analyses

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Historic preservation has, to date, received relatively little attention from sociologists, usually meriting only brief mention under topics of urban gentrification or community organization. But within the context of its history and its significance in modern society, preservation emerges as a multilevel response to industrialization and related processes of social change: what gets preserved and how it is symbolically interpreted depends upon the class structure of society and the related social mapping of time and place. The following comparative analysis of preservation in Great Britain and the United States demonstrates the importance of these factors.

KEY WORDS: restoration; historical preservation; comparative analysis; Great Britain; United States; National Trust; historical societies; social mapping.

INTRODUCTION

Popular movements for historic preservation represent discontent with industrialization—its dislocations and transformations (Lears, 1981; MacCarthy, 1981). Those who verbalize and act upon their discontent are those who most clearly perceive impending loss and who take actions to prevent it or, at least, to "contain the damage" (Maris, 1974). Preservationist campaigns have consequences for society at large, as new challenges emerge based on the relative successes of this social response that is part social movement, part organization, part generalized malaise.

While sharing certain traits traceable to the process of industrialization itself, historic preservation takes different forms in different societies. Two critical factors that determine its form are social structure, particularly social classes and competing status groups (Wolff, 1983; Bourdieu, 1984;

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DiMaggio, 1982), and social mapping (Suttles, 1968; Hunter, 1974; Rochberg-Halton, 1986), which includes the physical remains that are candidates for preservation, their territorial distribution, and the preservationists' consciousness of history and their role in its symbolic interpretation (Burke, 1984). To illustrate the importance of these factors, comparative evidence is presented from the United States and Great Britain.

While in France preservation planning was early centralized under the governmental authority of the Commission des Monuments Historiques, in Great Britain and the United States preservation came about originally through the activities of extragovernmental forces, encompassing local and national organizations. In each society in turn, preservation has become institutionalized within every level of political organization, from local village or town up through its assignment to a specific national department or ministry: in Great Britain, the Ministry of the Environment; in the United States, the Department of the Interior, specifically, the National Park Service.

The historical comparison that follows demonstrates how the preservation movement reveals aspects of the culture and social structure of each society, while it also suggests the extent to which the movement for historic preservation can be traced to the process of industrialization. Under industrialization must be included the related processes of urbanization, commercialization, and growth in transportation networks (Hays, 1957; Wiebe, 1967). As we shall see, early preservation campaigns often were retroactive rather than proactive, responding to specific threats posed to historic buildings and areas of scenic beauty by the forces of change.

Historic preservation is part of a larger consciousness, which includes efforts to preserve art and manuscripts, antiquities, monuments of every sort from cemeteries and battlefields, and also includes the interest in wilderness preservation that led to the National Parks movement in America and countryside preservation in Great Britain (Lowenthal, 1985; Shi, 1985; Runte, 1979; Axelrod, 1985). Even within the subtopic of preservation of built structures, we find a range of strategies, including preservation, restoration, conservation and consolidation, reconstitution, adaptive reuse (gentrification of warehouses, transformation of railroad cars into restaurants), reconstruction, and replication (Fitch, 1982:46–47).

This discussion focuses primarily on the development of major preservation organizations. It asks, among other questions, why Britain early achieved a powerful, centralized organization with massive holdings, while in the United States achievement of a centralized organization came fairly late. Beyond such structural concerns, however, are others of cultural content, which have to do with how the concepts of "past" and "present" are differently incorporated within the mythic interpretation of each society's industrial transition (Graña, 1971).

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Since the analysis is comparative, it is worth considering to what extent one society influenced the other. We find some evidence of British influence within the parks movement: Americans were affected by Ruskin's writings on landscape and earlier theories of the beautiful and the sublime. Even here, however, Americans consciously steered away from the British model, which they viewed as elitist for its assumption that the laboring classes were incapable of aesthetic appreciation (MacEwen and MacEwen, 1982). There was some sharing of general philosophic interest in "culture" and "civilization" on both sides of the Atlantic (Williams, 1983; Taylor, 1976). Beyond this, however, while there seems awareness of each other's activities, there appears very little *direct* influence, at least until the 1940s. Indicative of this fact, British artist C. R. Ashbee came to America in 1901 with a view to seeing whether a National Trust, similar to that recently founded in England, might also be established here. What he found was such varied, energetic, local activity that he concluded America would find its own way to preservation, and that adoption of the British model would not be appropriate to this different social structure and setting (Hosmer, 1981; v. 2:810). While a National Trust was officially founded almost 50 years later, its organization and concerns differ from those of the British in ways that reflect greater social and cultural differences.

PRESERVATION IN BRITAIN

The origins of preservation in Great Britain were primarily intellectual and artistic. Williams (1983) suggested that thinkers as different as Edmund Burke and William Cobbett shared a common revulsion at many of the physical and social changes industrialization was producing across Britain. In his *Rural Rides* (1830), Cobbett described the beauty of the English countryside, a beauty formed not just of physical landscape but of the traditional way of life attached to it: the customs and social understandings that were as much responsible for its shape and aspect as any natural feature, any stand of trees or rocky promontory. Writers and artists, particularly those associated with the Romantic Movement, not only found beauty in nature; they also perceived truth and nobility in an earlier social age—the Medieval period—that they then contrasted to the social disorder of their own times. According to historian Charles Dellheim, "they saw in the Middle Ages a source of values that represented alternatives to the emergent industrial capitalist social order. In Gothic architecture they saw the highest expression of the human quest for the infinite and delight in the finite. The Middle Ages provided them with an exemplar of spiritual certainty and religious piety that was

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profoundly appealing to those who craved both but often possessed neither" (Dellheim, 1982:4).

One major result of their writings and expressed concern was the founding, by John Ruskin, John Stuart Mill, William Morris, and others, of the Commons Preservation Society in 1865. The purpose of this society was to help protect the remaining communally held lands against enclosure, with campaigns launched to defend such notable lands as Hampstead Heath and Wimbledon Commons (Matheson, 1945). A second major effort resulted in the founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877). This group protested the careless restoration and alteration of historic buildings and monuments.

For Ruskin, the chief justification for conservation was contained within the idea of age itself: the quasisacred character of that which has endured through generations of inhabitants and successions of historical events (Ruskin, 1906). Other members of this artistic–intellectual coterie went further than Ruskin. Morris in particular saw preservation as part of a battle against an increasingly commercialized and despiritualized world. "Is it absolutely necessary," he wrote to *Commonweal* on August 6, 1887, "that every scrap of space in the City should be devoted to money-making and are religion, sacred memories, recollections of the great dead, memorials of the past, works of England's greatest architects to be banished from this wealthy city?" (Thompson, 1967:59).

The widening of interest from the Medieval period to the "ancient" per se was accompanied by a widening of support from artists and intellectuals to a broader base in local communities. During the Victorian period, local organizations sprang up throughout England, many of them combining an interest in historic monuments with interests in natural history, antiques, or archeology: for example, the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club (1875), the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (1878), and the Hampstead Antiquarian and Historical Society (1897) (Dellheim, 1982:46).

This spreading interest in the past laid the groundwork for the foundation of the National Trust in 1895. Three individuals provided the specific catalyst. Robert Hunter, a solicitor active in the Commons Preservation Society, suggested in a speech in Birmingham made to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science that a "land company" might be formed "with a view to the protection of public interests in the open spaces of the country" (Fedden, 1968:3). This suggestion was quickly seconded by Octavia Hill, a philanthropist active in improving housing for the urban poor. She suggested to Hunter that the term "company" be changed to "trust," commenting, "You will do better. . . to bring forward its benevolent than its commercial character. People don't like unsuccessful business, but do like Charity

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where a little money goes a long way because of good management" (Fedden, 1968:3). The third main actor, Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, had helped defend the scenic Lake District against a railway bill, but had initially appeared uninterested in the Trust. In 1893, however, when certain Lake District properties of scenic value came on the market, he recognized that a need existed for an agency that could buy, manage, and protect such scenic and historic sites. He then joined with Hill and Hunter to protect the Lake District. This, then, became the first important symbol of British preservation, as the call to "Save the Lake District" drew support from the many who had vacationed there and who perceived this mountainous area as a land of exceptional national beauty with an almost spiritual dimension.

The fight was to preserve this preindustrial landscape from the forces of industrialization, a challenge the leadership had already faced in the effort to preserve common land. To be effective in this battle, however, they realized they must adopt a new form of social organization. In industrial society, the sporadic resistance of concerned individuals would not suffice. Thus in January 1895, the National Trust was incorporated as a public, nonprofit company (Matheson, 1945:122).

In 1900, Trust membership stood at approximately 250 members; by 1928 it had grown to over 1000, and by 1935 the figure was over 8000. The biggest growth, however, occurred after World War II. In 1950 membership was 23,000; in 1960, 97,000; and by 1965, 158,000 (Fedden, 1968:139). As is typical in a crusade, some old-timers regretted the very success of the movement, in terms of numbers attracted, and wondered whether "quantity" was taking over from "quality."

In the early years, the small but dedicated membership was very successful in acquiring scenic lands and grand historic buildings. By 1900, they had acquired 180 properties, including the Farne Islands, large stretches of the Lake District, Bodiam and Tatteshall castles, Chedworth Roman villa, and Barrington Court, among others. Along with such successes, preservationists faced continued challenges from industrialization, commercialization, and new leisure activities. Trust committee minutes record threats to the landscape due to motor rallies on the South Downs, hydroplanes on lake Windermere, pylons, advertising, new highways, and pollution attacking many sites of natural beauty and historic significance (Fedden, 1968:25).

Initially the Trust appeared eager to accept any property of historic merit or scenic beauty, but eventually it was forced to become more selective, emphasizing that properties would have to be of national, rather than merely local, significance. Most notably, they undertook, in the years surrounding World War II, what is known as the "Country House Scheme." The large country estates, which had symbolized the leisured good life for the upper classes, had become increasingly difficult to maintain in the post-World War

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I years, as the number of servants declined and as death duties were imposed on the estates. For many threatened with having to give up family estates, the Trust came to the rescue. Through this procedure, descendents can maintain ownership of their impressive properties, receiving Trust financial support in exchange for opening parts of their homes to tourists during limited seasonal hours. These country homes have become symbolic of the Trust and figure importantly in its holdings. They provide a three-dimensional picture of a gracious and harmonious social order, a world we have lost.

Thus despite the foundation of other preservationist organizations that deal specifically with 20th-century structures, such as the Thirties Society, much of preservation in Britain wears a preindustrial face. British preservationists must respond to the lode of structures surviving from a documented history extending many centuries before industrialization. While the British National Trust has in recent decades preserved select industrial structures, these are few compared to its legacy of historic homes and landscapes. The major houses, gardens, and historic ruins also attract the largest number of visitors. The image overall, then, is the traditional one of a green and pleasant isle.

PRESERVATION IN THE UNITED STATES

In America, the motive behind the earliest preservation effort was neither artistic nor intellectual: it was patriotic. The first major effort was the successful crusade, launched by South Carolinean Ann Pamela Cunningham in 1853, to save Mount Vernon. Her purpose was to inspire in future generations the patriotism and noble character of the founding fathers (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1976:21). To some extent, her Mount Vernon Ladies Association formed the prototype for other early organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames, who usually limited their preservation efforts to one building for each chapter, usually used as the local headquarters. Other early sites of preservation with a clearly patriotic symbolism assigned to them included Andrew Jackson's home, The Hermitage (saved in 1856); Carpenter's Hall, site of the First Continental Congress (also 1856); Washington's headquarters in Morristown, New Jersey (1873); and Valley Forge (1878) (Hosmer, 1981). Local historical societies were formed throughout the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of them specifically to honor the place where Washington rested his head, or where some native son of later prominence had passed his early years.

While patriotism was the major motive behind many 19th-century preservationist efforts, it was soon joined by a second, which also reflected

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the extent to which preservation must be seen as a culturally specific response to industrialization. If the first motive was political, the second assumed a more economic cast. The most forceful proponents of this second, 20th-century message were the major industrialists, among them John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford. Greenfield Village, founded by Ford in 1929, was a pastiche of historic buildings, through which Ford meant to teach the lessons history books missed or muddled. As preservationist historian Charles Hosmer quotes Ford, "I'm going to start up a museum and give people a true picture of the development of the country. . . . We're going to build a museum that's going to show the industrial history, and it won't be bunk" (1981:80). One *New York Times* editorial writer wondered what possessed Ford to collect these totems of preindustrial America. "Has any competent psychologist tried to analyze Henry Ford's passion for American antiques? The unparalleled Dearborn collection of spinning wheels, dutch ovens, covered bridges and other relics of an early American past is the work of a man whose life mission has been to take us away from that past as quickly as might be. The creator of the assembly-belt civilization is in love with the old handicraft civilization. Henry Ford adores the horse-and-buggy. It is as if Stalin went in for collecting old ledgers and stocktickers" (Hosmer, 1981:94).

Ford's passion was shared by other men, not all as well known, but successful businessmen in their own right. Among them was Albert Wells, head of American Optical Company in Southbridge, Massachusetts, and founder of Old Sturbridge Village. As his father had been a farmer, he felt himself rooted to New England even as his own work formed part of its industrial transformation. Wells had a particular appreciation for old tools; during the Depression families would come from miles to sell him their "junk." His son, who had studied John Dewey at school, advised his father on the importance of learning by doing and suggested that Wells's collection of tools might be best displayed in a small village, where visitors could observe the replicated activities of 19th-century farmers and craftsmen (Karp, 1982). The end goal: "To preserve the ever-good things of New England's past in a manner that will teach their usefulness to the people of the present and the future. . . above all, how virtues and ideals expressed in them can be applied to life and work today" (Hosmer, 1981:114).

But perhaps the best known effort, and the most significant in terms of its impact, was the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. In 1926, William A. R. Goodwin, head of the Department of Bible Literature and Religious Education at the College of William and Mary and also rector of Bruton Parish Church (which he had helped restore), succeeded in his aim of influencing John D. Rockfeller to back Williamsburg's restoration. Williamsburg then became the model both for other restorations, such as Litchfield,

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Connecticut (Butler, 1985), and for new housing, including both exterior and interior design.

Thus the financial backing for American preservation's most publicized showcases came from wealthy individuals who wanted to communicate in this very visual way their image of American society, past and present. Up through 1930 there was little thought of a national organization. The 6 states of New England were already joined together in the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), founded in 1910. Under the direction of William Sumner Appleton, an architectural historian and full-time preservationist, the SPNEA shifted the focus from patriotism to architecture in its campaigns (Hosmer, 1981). Elsewhere, specific cities and towns became centers of preservation. Not surprisingly, these were most notably places with a definite sense of identity shared either by a local upper class or by a new status group of recent arrivals.

An example of the first instance is Charleston, where the decline following the Civil War had left fine old antebellum buildings threatened with demolition by the early 20th century. Following the example set by Ann Pamela Cunningham, Susan Pringle Frost, a real estate broker, began a crusade to save these buildings. But, unlike Cunningham, she began by restoring them and selling them, often at a loss. Her interest in preserving homes with the "stability and nobility of character and taste, which a modern commericial age can ill afford to dispense with," soon spread to other influential Charlestonians, as Hosmer is at pains to point out—"evenly divided between men and women, with professionals from many important fields"—who shared a belief "that something was sacred about the city" (1981:273).

While each local crusade had its specific symbols and goals based in large measure on its historic legacy, the crusaders did seem drawn from the same pool. Douglas (1977) has argued that as status groups in search of a new social role, women and ministers progressively defined culture as their special concern in 19th-century America. Ministers were notable among the preservation leadership—Williamsburg's Godwin, the Lake District's Canon Rawnsley—and women were also well represented. Once the professionals, in those decades almost by definition men, became involved, the proportion of women involved declined. As in Britain, artists and teachers were also among the first to recognize the potential in neglected byways of history. In San Antonio, a small group of women artists founded the San Antonio Conservation Society. Other notable centers of early preservationist activism included Natchez, where women's garden clubs organized annual "pilgrimages" to historic homes "Where the Old South Still Lives"; St. Augustine; New Orleans; Monterey; Annapolis; Newport; and old Western mining towns such as Tombstone, Arizona (Hosmer, 1981).

In these varied efforts, we see how early preservationists mounted crusades against the forces of industrial transformation threatening their communities, chief among them urban redevelopment and new transportation

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construction (highways, parking garages, service stations). Like the British movement, however, American preservation would not long remain in the hands of a few dedicated crusaders: it too would undergo a process of professionalization and bureaucratization, what Burke termed "the bureaucratization of the imaginative," with architects and historians playing increasingly significant roles (1984).

Up until 1930, federal involvement in preservation was minimal, about evenly split between the War Department, responsible for monuments and battlefields, and the National Park Service (NPS). In the 1930s, however, the NPS began to assert a greater authority, demonstrated in particular by winning support for the Historic American Buildings Survey. While providing government work for unemployed architects, this survey documented the architectural structure and detail of historic buildings, many of which were at risk. The survey itself provided a pathway for communication among experts, while it alerted the public to preservation possibilities within their own communities. The second major achievement of the NPS was the eventual passage of the Historic Sites Act (1935). This act set the terms for the acquisitions of properties, called for a survey of properties to be repeated at least every ten years, and recommended a National Board on Historic Sites to advise the secretary of the interior.

Still, the NPS was not an independent agency. When President Roosevelt turned against preservation with America's entry into World War II, preservationists realized that the full responsibility for existing and future properties might be better handled by an organization separate from government that could make preservation its one goal and *raison d'être*. Further, the localism that had characterized American preservation from the beginning made coordination very difficult. It was for these reasons that professionals and activists in government and in the private sector founded the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949. Modeled on the British Trust, it was to be a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving America's historic legacy and to furthering the preservationist cause.

Fifty-five years behind the British Trust, the American Trust has far fewer properties and assets. While for 1984 the British Trust reported assets of 102 million pounds, the American Trust reported assets of less than 31 million dollars, about one-fourth to one-fifth the amount. Further, the American Trust operates only 13 historic homes open to the public, ranging from southern plantations to the homes of Woodrow Wilson and Frank Lloyd Wright. Much of its emphasis is on encouraging local groups, offering technical advice, and lobbying for preservationist causes in state and national governments. While the National Trust can now be described as Britain's third largest landholder, the American Trust owns outright only the 13 historic houses previously mentioned, although it also is involved as cosponsor with many local and state groups.

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As one example, the American Trust sponsors the "Main Streets" program, which is designed to help revive small towns' and cities' business districts suffering from competition with suburban malls. The 1984 annual report listed Main Streets programs in 128 towns in 12 states spread geographically from Massachusetts to Texas to Oregon. This program draws on the importance of the "small town" as a symbol of all that is good, strong, and true in American life (Varenne, 1977; Vidich and Bensman, 1968). It also appeals to American practicality in that it is good for business. It also, finally, appealed to President Reagan, who addressed a national video conference, with an audience of more than 20,000 from approximately 2900 communities. Underlining the Main Streets strategy of preservation and self-help, Reagan said, "Our tax credits have made the preservation of our older buildings not only a matter of respect for beauty and history, but of economic good sense."

A second major program reflecting the same mix of professional Trust know-how and local enthusiasm is the "Inner City Ventures," which initiates revitalization of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods in urban historic districts. In 1984, the Trust provided $565,552 toward these ventures, generating total investments of over $5 million for 8 projects in 4 states. In one case, Hispanic youths in a rundown Chicago neighborhood learned construction skills while transforming an 1882 tenement into low-cost housing and office space.

In its publications, the Trust emphasizes both local participation and economic and political sophistication. While the early crusade generated professional organizations and graduate programs, today's preservationists stress the continued importance of the dedicated amateur. Today's movement thus manages to coordinate, however loosely, the efforts of amateur and professional, homeowner and bureaucrat, architectural historian and real estate developer. Above all, it manages to preserve the facade of small-town America by drawing on the technology and economic and political organizational forms characteristic of mass society (Vidich and Bensman, 1968).

DISCUSSION

Social Structure

Historic preservation reflects the new class alignments that resulted from industrialization. In Britain, the social role of preservation activists was twofold, an intrinsically contradictory response to the new status disjunctions. On the one hand, the depth of class consciousness gave rise to efforts to create new bases of communal harmony and of national identification. On the other, these same efforts may, as Dellheim suggests, "have reinforced

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the hegemony of local elites, who assumed the roles of proprietors of the past as well as masters of the present" (1982:58).

When a preexisting traditional order is undermined by the forces of industrialization, new forms of social organization such as clubs and voluntary associations move into the void to create a new basis for community activity and identification (Shils, 1975). Perhaps, in their interest in preservation, archaeology, antiquities, and natural history, these Victorians were searching for a new base for social relations in communities where the earlier order had been undermined by industrialization and the new class structure. But preservation was not simply a case of rich poor, upper class vs. new working class. Instead, interest in preservation was demonstrated both by social elites looking back to the past to legitimate their present power and to maintain it in this new context, and by culturally progressive forces, an identifiable status group of artists and intellectuals, who saw in it an alternative to the human and natural costs of industrialization. Each opposed the new industrial bourgeoisie, whose enterprises were destroying both the traditional countryside (MacEwen and MacEwen, 1982) *and* the traditional social hierarchy. Thus the past can be made to serve a range of political purposes (Calhoun, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Rochberg-Halton, 1986), even as it gives rise to identifiable "taste cultures" (Gans, 1974).

The very idea of the National "Trust" reflects a tutorial relationship established between preservationists and the populace, a relationship of unequals, as between teacher and student (Donzelot, 1979). Through the authority of the Trust, preservationists were self-appointed custodians of a national legacy until such time as all others shared their particular appreciation of Britain's past. As Fedden writes, "In a Utopia where a perfect sense of values prevailed there would be no place for a National Trust" (1968:53). In contrast, Patrick Wright sees their activities as part of the "anxious aristocratic alignment," which perceives history not as progress but as betrayal. In this alignment, says Wright, "'We,' like the monks of Lindisfarne during the Dark Ages, are the 'trustees' or custodians of the past" (1985:148). Wright surrounds the "we" with quotation marks because he repeatedly questions who is preserving what for whom: does the British nation in the motto "On Trust for the Nation" include Asians, punks, the unemployed, the working class?

In the United States, preservation became one means of social integration: not just of classes but, equally important, of the increasingly diverse racial and ethnic populations. The homes of local heroes, revolutionary leaders, and of presidents were meant to teach civic obedience both to new generations and to new immigrants arriving throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. They helped construct civic identities. Taylor has described how the idea of the "American" was early layered with distinctive regional colorings (1976). At the same time, however, patriotic icons, chief among them

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George Washington, spanned these regions and signified to Americans that, despite their differences, they really were all one nation (Schwartz and Miller, 1986).

In similar fashion, the "historic villages" estabished or preserved by Rockefeller, Ford, and Wells, among others, were complex gestures communicating several meanings. On one level, these self-made men were claiming seigneurial rights long established on the other side of the Atlantic. These successful businessmen, not "to the manor born," did not hesitate to create both manor *and* village, reflecting their position of leadership and hence their ability to impose symbolic interpretations on the landscape. Their various interpretations all presented some form of resolution of the status disjunctures and class tensions arising from industrialization. Ford, as we have seen, wanted to present his view of history, a view that, unlike that presented in the history books, would not be "bunk."

On the regional level, it is interesting that the society that most resembles the English organizations is the SPNEA founded in 1910. The class position of the Boston Brahmins and intellectuals most clearly approximates that of their English counterparts. Their assumption of responsibility for the tradition embedded within this region most resembles this particular "tradition of service" among the early British philanthropists. Other regions developed their own organizations, methods, and goals.

This localistic and regional emphasis within American preservation reflects how pluralism is embedded in the social structure as in its ideology. Volunteerism is also part of this ideology. French sociologist Hervé Varenne has remarked on how small-town Americans feel they must always be constructing society anew, in contrast to the more typical French attitude of suffering the weight of an omnipresent society (1977). Varenne is reiterating a point first made by de Tocqueville about the American obsession with volunteerism and participation. Preservation has very much this quality in America and draws upon these strengths.

The Social Mapping of Structures

It is clear that preservation presents different problems in Great Britain than in the United States. A nation with a mere fraction of the land of the latter, Britain's cultural landscape is far more densely packed with prehistoric landworks, Roman and Celtic ruins, ancient Saxon churches, medieval and Tudor houses and inns, great cathedrals, palaces, fortresses, Georgian houses and townscapes, and so on.

The past is a moving point. Recognition of the "need" to preserve Roman ruins was already voiced in Elizabethan England (Lowenthal, 1985). When preservation began to attract attention in the 19th century, the first

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targets were the old medieval structures: the Gothic was praised and imitated, the Georgian was reviled. After the turn of the century, spurred by publication of Geoffrey Scott's *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914), the tables were turned. Now the 18th-century Georgian country homes were valued as architecture and as history, preparing the way for the Country House Scheme that followed. Today, it is the industrial past and the recent past (early to mid-20th century) that are the new targets of preservation.

Such new targets do not replace the old; rather, they are added to them. Thus the "shape of the past" becomes the "weight of the past," as preservation requires an increasing cut of the nation's resources. Within the British National Trust itself, the costs attached to preservation are so great that the Trust will not accept outright gifts of historical and architecturally significant homes unless they come accompanied with a "dowry" of upward of a million pounds.

The United States, by contrast, is a relatively new nation. Underlining this fact, when interest in preserving Indian ruins arose at the turn of the century, it was because they were viewed as providing the missing antiquity: parks such as the Mesa Verde would substitute for Athens and Rome (MacEwen and MacEwen, 1982). Periods providing much of the historic lode of Britain—Roman, Saxon, Tudor—were not, in such form, part of American history. Instead, the Revolution was seen as the glorious beginning of American society, and Revolutionary homes and monuments would inculcate political virtues. This point in time extended both backward to the pilgrims and quickly forward to take in the earliest structures in settlements that stretched across the continent. Clearly, what is historic in Los Angeles is relatively commonplace in Boston. For this reason, the United States has been more willing to plumb the recent past, including the commercial past: early McDonald's hamburger stands are seen as structures worth preserving. Thus, while emphasizing the social-structural and social-psychological elements of preservation, we must give proper credit to the evidence of history. This evidence, however, never stands alone, but requires symbolic interpretation (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

The Social Mapping of Territory

If Britain early achieved a major centralized organization, it is partly because local elites were more nearly a unified ruling class than those found in America, whose influence was more purely local or at most regional (Mills, 1967). The British were more closely connected, both socially and territorially, in an age when modern communication and transportation networks were not yet fully achieved. This closer connection clearly facilitated the rapid

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formation of a national organization, whose interests transcended those of any specific locality.

In choosing major sites for preservation, the British Trust currently takes into account its relative distribution across counties. Thus, for example, Wimpole Hall was accepted for preservation not simply because of its evident historic and architectural significance, but also because Cambridgeshire did not have a major country house on the National Trust list. In the United States, similarly, the National Trust operates regional offices and regularly reports on regional activities. As a clearing house, it manages to bind together the once diffuse local efforts through the sharing of information.

Physical structure and social structure also come together in fights over "turf." Newsom (1983) has detailed how Georgetown, now a major preservation enclave, was as late as 1930 a neighborhood with a black population of greater than 40%. Repeatedly, it has been the case that when an area is considered "ripe" for preservation, it is also "ripe" for gentrification and for a major change in residents from working-class minorities to middle- and upper-class whites (Barthel, 1979). In other instances, preservation of old structures conflicts with the possibility of new jobs in construction and industry. Trust officers and staff, aware of such divisive conflicts involving class and territory, have developed programs such as the Inner City Ventures that seek to enable the working class to both restore and remain in historic neighborhoods. Nonetheless, in many cases, different economic interests are involved as preservation attempts develop into territorial disputes.

Cultural Consciousness

Social mapping involves more than the presence of structures distributed over territory. It also involves preservationists' perceptions of their history, its significance, and their own role as its guardians. History, impossible to grasp in its full complexity, is more easily assimilated as myth (Barthes, 1973; Durand, 1981). Thus the early British preservationists were influenced by the widely current idea, propagated not just by Burke and Cobbett, but by Coleridge, Ruskin, and Scott, among others, that the Middle Ages represented a period of heroic nobility and organic solidarity. They joined others in looking back to a preindustrial "golden age" (Williams, 1973).

In this mythology, the Lake District symbolized, as perhaps no other piece of British landscape does, a distilled vision of the preindustrial rural idyll. In this idyll, social relations take their character from the landscape, creating a yeoman sturdiness. Hard work and often cruel weather brought a special beatitude to the farmers and their families not to be found in the more modern world. Thus it appeared both natural and right that when the railroad, the harbinger of the industrial order, threatened to cut right through

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this sacred vale, social activists joined together in its defense, sparking the foundation of the National Trust and inspiring other efforts. The golden-age image of preindustrial natural and social harmony is further and more widely reinforced through the magnificent country homes and their surrounding parks and landscape. The image provided reinforces that of Britain as a green and pleasant land, with the past appearing a particularly nice place to visit.

In the United States, the first wave of preservation contributed to a larger effort at creating an appropriate political mythology for a people without king or crown. The early emphasis on patriotic sites as inspiration for preservation must be seen as part of a wider, middle 19th-century fascination with the revolutionary era and the nation's founding. Some of this fervor must be traced to the political convulsions of the pre- and post-Civil War period, to the effort to recapture the unity of those early days of nationhood. Some of it derives from the changing socioeconomic order, as new immigrants arrived and had to be assimilated. Older arrivals themselves were being drawn from rural villages and towns to the expanding cities and toward the frontier, while the quality of life also changed dramatically for those who remained in the small towns and villages of the Eastern seaboard. For all these reasons, then, the preservationist crusade in America early assumed a didactic posture more directed toward inculcating political virtue rather than, as in Great Britain, encouraging aesthetic appreciation or moody reflection on nature.

The second wave of preservation also reflected underlying structural dislocations. Historians have described the period surrounding the turn of the century as a great transition, during which American society moved from one set of values, associated primarily with local, rural communities (for example, religion, kinship, tradition) to those values associated with modern, urban society (business competitiveness, social and geographic mobility, an emphasis on innovation and social change). A transition of such magnitude needed to be integrated into the mythic understandings Americans shared of their history and national purpose. Preservation became part of this myth-making process, as Americans began to construct ritualized presentations of their preindustrial past. These presentations served to confirm the superiority of the present: of capitalism, progress, and the American way of life.

Both Ford and Wells were seeking to resolve the tension between the myth of the independent American individualist of the past—the noble yeoman—and the present they had helped create, which made this fiction an anachronism (Hofstadter, 1955; Smith, 1950). Even today, tourist brochures promise visitors to Sturbridge that they will "see up close how life in New England used to be, in the days when most families still earned their livings from tilling the soil, when picturesque villages were just beginning to dot the landscape, and when strong individuals like Emerson, Thoreau, and Daniel Webster seemed to stand as tall as New England's rugged hills."

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In restoring Williamsburg, Goodwin's stated motives involved retaining more than the buildings: he also hoped the restoration might recapture the "spirit of the past." Rockefeller, however, appears to have been motivated by a more aesthetic vision of a harmonious social whole, one which, of course, excluded the slave cabins and the auction block in the square (Karp, 1981). At least one historian has remarked on the irony of Rockfeller money, which, in its corporate guise of Standard Oil Company, helped destroy the "old America" through the popularization of the automobile and the tearing down of old structures, now "saving" Williamsburg from these very forces (Greiff, 1971:7).

If Great Britain looks back to a golden age that existed before class tensions were a recognized social fact and openly divisive force, the United States also had a golden age, its own agrarian paradise of equality, social harmony, and civic order (Jackson, 1980). Colonial, frontier, and ethnic villages provide the stage set for this American saga, the story of men and women in a free society. Through this process, the truly old and the newly re-created become hopelessly confused in the public imagination. Genuine historic villages, such as Iowa's Amana Colonies, have their histories diluted into mythic representations (Barthel, 1984). History is not presented as complex and contradictory, but as the nation's blissful childhood, which has led, necessarily, toward the more developed, if less "pleasant," society of today.

CONCLUSION

Thus, while preservationists today present themselves as guardians of the past, they are also involved in shaping the future. Through selectively *communicating* the past, they in some measure *control* the present. They shape the social identity of places and people through the process of social mapping so integral to their enterprise. When an American Trust official states, in a personal interview, that, "In the end, we all realize it's a question of values," he recognizes the interpretative quality of preservation and its function within the nation's symbolic order. This examination of preservation in these two societies thus reveals how physical structures do not stand simply as things in themselves, as architecture undemanding of interpretation. Rather, preservation involved from its origins the critical act of symbolic interpretation, as structures were valued, by identifiable status groups, for their aesthetic, political, socioeconomic, cultural, and above all *didactic* significance. Both the United States and Great Britain allowed for considerable participation by citizens, although this participation took different forms. Further research should reveal significant differences in societies such as France, in which the government was involved earlier and controls the preser-

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vation process to a far greater extent. Case studies should follow, examining the role of specific class and status alliances in preservation campaigns. The comparative analysis undertaken here demonstrates how preservation symbols and goals in each society reflect the interaction of class structure with the process of social mapping, involving physical structures, territoriality, and cultural consciousness. Such factors must be considered if we are to understand how preservation emerged as a societally specific response to the broader structural readjustments of industrialization and its significance for contemporary society.

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