ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL

THREE CENTURIES OF EDUCATING ARCHITECTS IN NORTH AMERICA

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Historic Preservation

A History of Historic Preservation Pedagogy

Formal university training in historic preservation began in the United States in 1964, with the founding by architect James Marston Fitch of the Master of Science in Restoration and Preservation program at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture. By the 1980s there were sixteen graduate-level programs in historic preservation.[1] As of 2010 the number stood at twenty-three graduate programs, ten undergraduate programs, and twenty-two certificate programs.[2] No sooner did historic preservation achieve academic legitimacy as an architectural specialization, however, than a broader struggle began for disciplinary autonomy, which continues to this day.

The subtitle of the first history of the Columbia program, *Forging a Discipline*,[3] reveals the aspiration of the first generation of academically trained preservationists. This ambition has yet to materialize. It has been challenged by a competing dream of pure interdisciplinarity, according to which historic preservation is conceived as a specialized method and philosophy inhabiting the disciplines from which it emerged, especially architecture, art, archaeology, art history, planning, jurisprudence, and chemistry. Embedded in this struggle are a series of tensions that continue to haunt preservation education. Should historic preservation be a specialization, an independent profession, or an amateur practice? Should it be an autonomous body of knowledge or the technical application of knowledge developed in its parent fields? Should it be a humanistic or a scientific pursuit?

Historian Larry Tise, one of the founders and the third president of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, as well as the director of the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH), boiled down the argument for preservation as a specialization without its own disciplinary locus: "I do not see preservation as a profession. ... It is something that must blend into everything. You see history the same way. History is not a discipline that can survive unto itself. It must be in concert with all other disciplines."[4] In this light, while Fitch's founding of the Columbia program may be read as a wager in favor of disciplinary autonomy, the fact that it took place within an architecture school made it simultaneously an attempt to give architecture primacy—first among equals, as it were—among other parent disciplines. Fitch's program borrowed heavily from architectural pedagogy, especially in making studio courses the core of the curriculum. **Figure 195**

In the mid-1960s, though, it was by no means a given that architecture should be the pedagogical model for historic preservation. At the time, only the universities of Ankara (which was the most explicit precedent for Columbia's program[5]), Rome, and London and the Royal Institute of Art in Copenhagen offered specialized training in historic preservation.[6] Their methods of instruction varied according to the disciplinary biases of their founders. The program at University College London, for instance, founded in 1937 by Mortimer Wheeler as the first in the United Kingdom, was intended originally for students of archaeology, and its curriculum adopted the pedagogical biases of archaeologists toward fieldwork.[7] In the United States, art history shaped early preservation pedagogy through its domination of art museums, and by extension of their conservation departments, where the technical side of preservation evolved; technical expertise is still known in the United States by the art-centric term *conservation*.[8] Sheldon Keck was a pioneer in conservation pedagogy. Trained at Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum, Keck established one of the first conservation laboratories in the nation within the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1934.[9] During the postwar era, Keck began working toward the goal of establishing the academic legitimacy of conservation, eventually founding the Conservation Center in 1960 within New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. The pedagogical objective was to elevate conservation from its amateur roots and "to produce a professional who would approach each object as a separate and individual problem, the solution to which would be determined through research and study, unlike the tradesman restorer's approach, which applied standard treatments to all objects and problems."[10] Significantly, the art historians on the faculty blocked attempts to make the center into a Master's degree program, awarding its students a Certificate in Conservation and forcing them to take art history as a core requirement. Graduates of the Conservation Center quickly moved into positions of prominence in both art and architecture preservation.

During the 1960s architecturally geared historic preservation programs within universities benefited from the turn in the U.S. preservation movement toward architectural and urban issues. Among the wider cultural trends that influenced this turn was, first, the social reaction to the failure of urban renewal policies, which Jane Jacobs helped to theorize and mobilize.[11] Second, there was the public and professional outcry over the demolition of architectural masterpieces such as McKim, Mead &

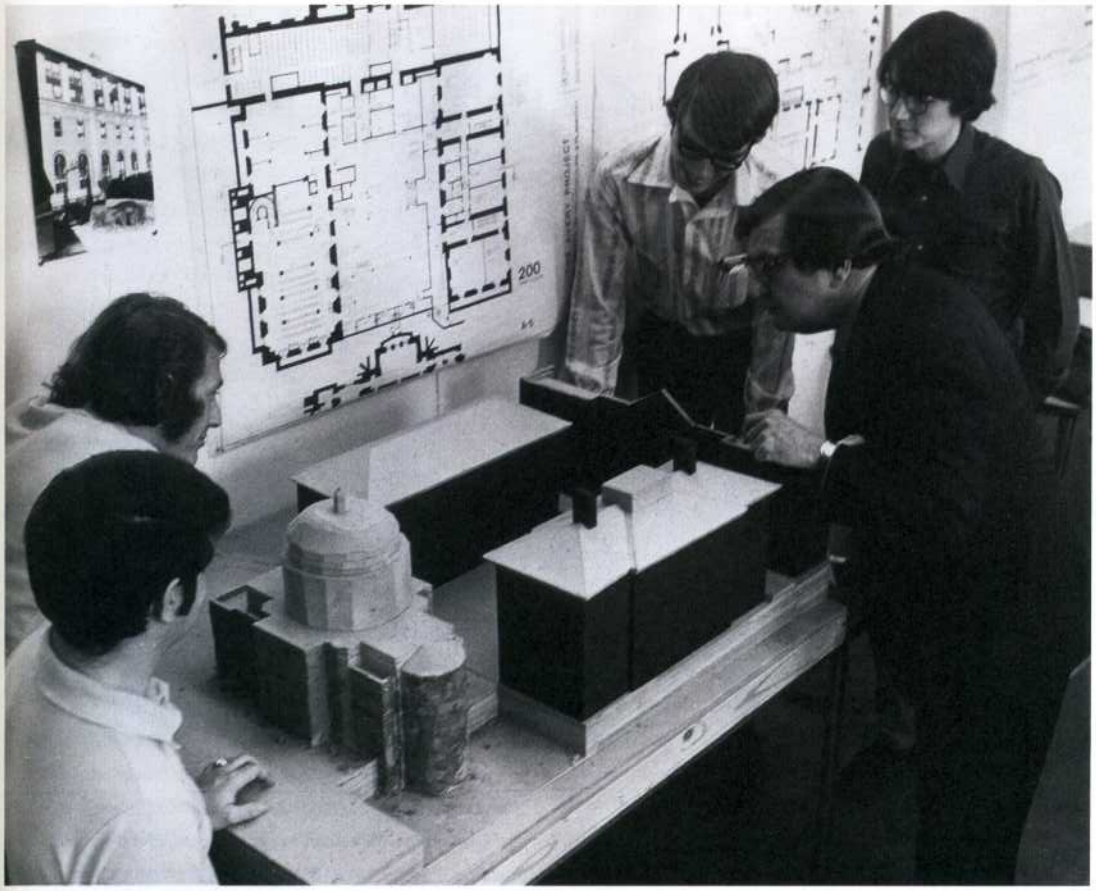

Figure 195
Professor James Marston Fitch (at right) and instructor Theo Prudon (second from left) examining a joint thesis project by students in Columbia University's historic preservation program, 1974, for an underground addition to McKim Mead & White's Avery Hall, home of Columbia's architecture school

White's Pennsylvania Station in New York (built 1910, demolished 1963) and Louis Sullivan's Chicago Stock Exchange Building (built 1894, demolished 1972). A third factor was the growth of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Originally chartered by Congress in 1949, the National Trust evolved into an effective funder of architecture preservation projects, a promoter of neighborhood revitalization, and an organizer of a private market for professional preservation services. Worried that there were not enough properly trained young preservation professionals and that retired military officers were taking over its directorships, the Trust's leadership also supported the new academic programs in historic preservation; the military personnel who had gravitated toward the field were good at organizing but they were not necessarily interested in preservation, and certainly did not see it as a career but rather as charity work.[12] Finally, there was also a turn toward architecture within the National Park Service as a result of its Mission 66 program to improve visitor center facilities in National Parks by 1966 and, a decade later, in 1976, specfically toward historical architecture in preparation for the nation's bicentennial celebration.

New historic preservation programs in universities capitalized on these increased needs of the National Park Service for properly trained architects. It was not a hard sell to prospective students since the agency had long hired architects through its enormously influential Historic American Building Survey (HABS), a program set up to document historical buildings. HABS was established in 1933 by Charles E. Peterson within the National Park Service, with the goal of putting to work thousands of architects left unemployed by the Great Depression. In order to get the program rapidly underway, Peterson involved Leicester B. Holland, who was both the head of the Fine Arts (now Prints and Photographs) Division of the Library of Congress and the chairman of the American Institute of Architects'

Figure 196
Architects measuring dimensions at Kentucky School for the Blind, Louisville, 1934

Committee on the Preservation of Historic Buildings.[13] Holland deployed the AIA's organizational structure of regional chapters to provide district officers and recruit architects for HABS. He also set up a standardized system to receive the thousands of drawings and photographs they produced and to archive them in the Library of Congress. The 1935 Historic Sites Act made HABS a permanent program of the National Park Service, providing a steady if modest source of income to its architects and stimulating interest in old buildings among architects across the nation. In many ways HABS may be considered a precursor to university programs in preservation, as it provided the first organized courses in preservation on a national scale. **Figure 196**

Significantly, Peterson also participated in the founding of the Columbia preservation program and was a key member of the faculty in the early years.[14] Peterson brought with him not only his experience with HABS but also a connection to what was perhaps the earliest systematic training program in historic preservation for architects: Colonial Williamsburg. When restoration work began there in 1926, with financial backing from John D. Rockefeller Jr., there was no precedent for such an ambitious historic preservation project in the United States and qualified architects were far and few between. The Boston firm of Perry, Shaw & Hepburn, architects for the restoration until the substantial completion of the project in 1934, had to improvise a way to train architects in the subtleties of historic preservation. By 1928, they had set up a permanent office in Williamsburg for more than twenty draftsmen to train on the job, measuring Tidewater colonial buildings and working on the restoration of the Wren Building and the reconstruction of the Capitol. That small operation has been glorified as "the first school of architectural restoration in the United States."[15] Regardless of its actual size, it had important repercussions throughout academe, especially through the proselytizing work of key individuals whom Rockefeller handpicked for his Advisory Committee of Architects, which supervised the work, and which included such influential figures as Fiske Kimball, architectural historian and director of what is now the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Edmund S. Campbell, head of the school of architecture at the University of Virginia; A. Lawrence Kocher, editor of *Architectural Record*; and Thomas E. Tallmadge, a prominent Chicago architect and architectural historian. As a National Park Service employee working in nearby Yorktown and Jamestown, Peterson became personally acquainted with the teaching methods developed at

Williamsburg, with their emphasis on direct measured drawing, and he adapted them for the purposes of HABS and later for his university teaching.[16]

Further impetus for historic preservation education came from the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, which saw the creation of the National Register of Historic Places, the National Historic Landmark program, and State Historic Preservation Offices and Registers, all of which had to be quickly staffed, not only by architects but also by historians. At Columbia, Fitch adjusted very quickly to this new professional reality, broadening his recruitment efforts beyond architecture students to include students from archaeology, art history, and social history. He acknowledged that "the field of restoration and preservation requires specialists from other areas as well as from architecture."[17] Under the umbrella of a renamed Master's in Historic Preservation degree, Fitch's interdisciplinary direction eventually led to the division of the program into four sectors—architectural design, planning, history, and materials conservation. This division became common in most other schools as well.

Historic preservation programs were also affected by new changes in architectural culture. In the 1970s and '80s, the height of the movement known as postmodernism provided an intellectual foundation and added legitimacy for architects to learn about and work on historical buildings. Coupled with the 1976 Tax Reform Act, which provided incentives for rehabilitation and diminished the economic benefits of demolition, postmodernism, with its emphasis on history, gave preservation new standing within architecture schools. Historic preservation themes were absorbed into academic design studios in the context of more general exercises involving renovations and additions, although without necessarily providing students with complementary courses on the technical and theoretical skills required of more demanding historic preservation work. This trend had its correlative in practice where, from a business perspective, historic preservation work on landmarked historical buildings was brought under the more general umbrella of work on existing buildings. To this day the AIA does not track the share of billings that the historic preservation industry represents for architects, but it is nonetheless significant that 45.9% of all billings for two-to-four person firms comes from renovations, rehabilitations, and additions, as opposed to 30.4% for firms with over 100 employees.[18]

While many schools provide a few courses in preservation as part of their architecture curriculum in order to prepare students for the realities of practice, these courses have not always been formalized into full-fledged historic preservation programs. Nevertheless, it is important to note that such courses within existing architecture departments have played a significant role as an incentive for architecture schools to assist in the development of preservation programs and to host them. The earliest records of such pioneering courses date back to the early 1950s, and include Howard Peckham's historic preservation class at the University of Michigan.[19] In 1959, Frederick D. Nichols in the department of architecture at the University of Virginia began to offer a preservation course as part an undergraduate curriculum in architectural history.[20] In 1963, Stephen W. Jacobs and Barclay G. Jones of Cornell University's departments of architecture and planning respectively began teaching a preservation seminar as part of a graduate program in architectural history.[21]

But even after historic preservation programs became commonplace, some architecture schools resisted the idea of preservation as a separate course of study. The teaching career of F. Blair Reeves is emblematic of this pedagogical position. A prominent preservationist who taught courses in preservation as a member of the faculty of architecture at the University of Florida from 1949 to 1987, Reeves was adamantly opposed to disciplinary autonomy: "I never have been sympathetic with any preservation program that offers a degree in preservation," wrote Reeves. "[Y]ou could be a historian and specialize in preservation. You could be a planner and specialize in preservation. But there's no such thing as a preservationist."[22] Reeves founded the Research and Education Center for Architectural Preservation (RECAP) at the University of Florida in 1970 to advance a multidisciplinary pedagogical approach. He believed that the core of an architect's specialized knowledge in preservation came from technical documentation of existing historic buildings. His teaching revolved around documentation: through careful observation, architects could understand the pathologies causing a building's deterioration and address them properly.

The majority of historic preservation programs in the United States were founded before Ronald Reagan became president in 1981. Reagan's 1984 Tax Reform Act cut funding to the National Park Service and to National Historic Preservation programs, causing a crisis in historic preservation education.[23] Preservationists began to worry about the combined effects of the contraction of the job market and the "proliferation of preservation schools."[24] The dream of disciplinary autonomy appeared to have run aground, and the voices supporting a nondisciplinary pedagogical model gained strength. "We

are not training, to the extent that we should, people to enter into other fields," argued Larry Tise. "[I]deally where we should be is that every law school should offer a course in historic preservation, so that every attorney that goes out is prepared to deal with preservation ... every planning school ... every history department ... every architectural school, school of design, the same way."[25] To anti-academics, full-fledged university preservation programs seemed unnecessarily bloated with academic requirements, too theoretical, and overly intellectual. This period of crisis saw an upsurge in non-academic vocational training programs run by private organizations such as the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), Restore, the International Masonry Institute, Cathedral Stone Products, the Preservation Trades Network, and others. These groups offered practicing professionals training in discrete preservation tasks, from filling out National Register nomination forms and filing for tax credits to assessing the settling of historical buildings through patterns of cracks on the facades to identifying cast iron. Significantly, these non-academic programs often enlisted the faculty of the more prestigious academic programs to conduct their workshops. Simultaneously, the National Trust began a program of courses on the maintenance of historic buildings, although it only lasted a few years.

The lack of professional certification requirements in the United States for the practice of preservation and for architects to work on monuments further undermined the relevance of university programs. To address this problem, the National Council of Preservation Education (NCPE) was founded in 1980 to bring uniformity to preservation education through the promotion of national standards for curricula and teacher promotion. The NCPE aspired to become a certifying agency for academic preservation programs equivalent to the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). Its efforts have yet to materialize, however, as a significant groundswell of opposition to certification has arisen within established programs, and its mission to promote the establishment of new preservation programs was quickly put to the test by the Reagan-era tax cuts. "I think many of these programs are just going to have to go out of business," prophesied Daniel Porter, director of the Cooperstown Graduate Program in Museum Studies, part of the State University of New York.[26]

With the benefit of hindsight, we now see that preservation education weathered the crisis of the mid-1980s remarkably well, and programs continued to grow in popularity. Perhaps this is because in the nearly two decades that preservation programs were in operation before the 1980s crisis, they had already produced a generation of highly trained preservationists who distinguished themselves within the profession and indeed began shaping it in their image. Clement M. Silvestro, director of the Chicago Historical Society, warned that the quality of education in a university should not be confused with that in a training workshop: "one has to be careful about whom he calls a professional and [whom] an amateur."[27] Despite the lack of a government-regulated professional certification in historic preservation akin to that in architecture, or perhaps precisely because of it, university programs have de facto become the rule and measure of the skills required to enter professional practice.

Today, historic preservation programs across the United States have more in common with each other than with the schools in which they reside. They are also more international in their outlook and more self-assured about the particular intellectual tradition that gives them coherence as part of a discipline. Journals such as *Future Anterior*, based at Columbia, have helped establish an independent scholarly academic discourse about historic preservation that is more theoretical, critical, and rigorous by virtue of being historically grounded than older publications, which were largely beholden to the interests of the professional associations that sponsored them. Historic preservation's disciplinary autonomy remains a source of debate, but it is interesting to note that the terms of the debate have shifted. Questions such as whether historic preservation should model itself more on architecture or planning, archaeology or history, have become less relevant in the context of profound transformations in academe that have put those disciplinary boundaries to the test. The question of disciplinary autonomy or heteronomy now appears less a matter of opposing positions and more one of registers within an expanded definition of disciplinarity, a definition that incorporates interdisciplinarity within itself. Historic preservation is poised today to emerge as emblematic of this new understanding of disciplinarity, which is as much about claiming areas of specialized knowledge as about opening up to, and helping to define, the larger questions that shape our world in the era of globalization and climate change. Perhaps a measure of historic preservation's new disciplinary reality is the degree to which more established disciplines like engineering and architecture are turning to it today in search of ways to assess the historical significance of the built environment and manage its changes in a culturally sensitive way.

Jorge Otero-Pailos

1
Daniel Porter, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, August 21, 1981, Archives and Manuscripts Department of the University of Maryland Libraries, 44.

2
National Council for Preservation Education, "NCPE Guide to Academic Programs in Historic Preservation," online at http://www.ncpe.us/chart.html.

3
Beth Sullebarger, ed., *Historic Preservation: Forging a Discipline* (New York: Preservation Alumni, 1985).

4
Larry Tise, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, August 24, 1981, Archives and Manuscripts Department of the University of Maryland Libraries, 38.

5
Fitch was a longtime friend of Cevat Erder, director of the historic preservation program at the University of Ankara in Turkey. I wish to thank my colleague Professor Norman Weiss for sharing his firsthand recollections of the origins of the Columbia program, as well as for his insights into the creation and operation of historic preservation training programs in the United States during the 1980s.

6
James Marston Fitch, "Professional Training for the Preservationist," *AIA Journal*, April 1969, 57.

7
Marie Berducou, "Introduction to Archaeological Conservation," in Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, eds., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, c. 1996), 257.

8
The term *conservation* has acquired multiple meanings over the years in different countries. In the United States it is used to refer both to the materials science side of building and art preservation as well as to the resource-management side of nature and wildlife preservation. In Britain *conservation* is used instead of *preservation* with respect to buildings.

9
William H. Honan, "Sheldon Keck, 83, Pioneer in the Field of Art Conservation," obituary, *New York Times*, June 17, 1993, online at http://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/17/obituaries/sheldon-keck-83-pioneer-in-the-field-of-art-conservation.html.

10
Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, "Conservation Center: History of the Center," online at http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/conservation/history.htm.

11
Jacobs criticized top-down city-planning projects like those promoted by Robert Moses in New York for destroying the social fabric of neighborhoods. Her arguments that historical streetscapes and neighborhoods provided socio-economic diversity and a stabilizing sense of identity in cities helped create a groundswell of interest in historic preservation among community activists as part of a bottom-up approach to city planning. See Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

12
James Moody, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, August 2 and 3, 1981, Archives and Manuscripts Department of the University of Maryland Libraries, 72.

13
See Library of Congress, "Built in America," online at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/hhintro.html. The Committee on the Preservation of Historic Buildings, now Historic Resources Committee, was established by architect Richard Upjohn in 1890 under the name Committee on Conservation of Public Architecture, and it is today the AIA's oldest standing committee. Before the establishment of academic historic preservation programs, the committee played a leading role in developing workshops and encouraging architects to gain the technical skills necessary for historic preservation work. For a history of the AIA's Historic Resources Committee, see Melissa Houghton, *Architects in Historic Preservation: The Formal Role of the AIA, 1890–1990* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Architects, 1990).

14
Fitch, "Professional Training for the Preservationist," 57–61.

15
Charles B. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926–1949* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press for the Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1981), 32.

16
Catherine C. Lavoie, "The Role of the AIA in the Formation of the Historic American Buildings Survey, Now Celebrating 75 Years," in *Preservation Architect*, online at http://info.aia.org/nwsltr_hrc.cfm?pagename=hrc_a_0908_habs_75th.

17
Fitch, "Professional Training for the Preservationist," 58.

18
The Business of Architecture: The 2005–2006 AIA Firm Survey (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Architects, 2007), 35.

19
Daniel Porter, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, August 21, 1981, 44.

20
Frederick D. Nichols, "Architectural History and the Student Architect: A Symposium," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26, no. 3 (October 1967): 191–92.

21
Michael Tomlan, "Historic Preservation Education: Alongside Architecture in Academia," in *Journal of Architectural Education* 47, no. 4 (May 1994), 188.

22
F. Blair Reeves, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, March 22, 1982, Archives and Manuscripts Department of the University of Maryland Libraries, 38.

23
The cuts in funding to historic preservation programs resulted in retrospective histories such as Philip V. Scarpino's "Planning for Preservation: A Look at the Federal-State Historic Preservation Program, 1966–1986," in *Public Historian* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 49–66.

24
Langley Wright, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, July 10, 1981, Archives and Manuscripts Department of the University of Maryland Libraries, 43.

25
Larry Tise, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, August 24, 1981, 38.

26
Daniel Porter, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, 1981, 45.

27
Clement M. Silvestro, interview with Charles Bringham Hosmer, August 12, 1981, Archives and Manuscripts Department of the University of Maryland Libraries, 40. Quoted by kind permission of Dr. Clement M. Silvestro.

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