

## Latinos In Historic Districts Whose History? Whose Neighborhood?

**F**rom the mid-20th century to the present, Latino immigration in central and southeastern Pennsylvania has had both an economic and social impact on such cities as Lancaster, York, Harrisburg, Reading, Allentown, and Philadelphia. Latinos coming to this region, mainly from Puerto Rico, have settled in inner city neighborhoods that often encompass some of the most historic areas of these cities. While each of these cities has established historic preservation planning and programs in the revitalization of its neighborhoods, communication about what these programs can offer to Latino residents has often been absent, as has an understanding by the preservation community of the Latino community's heritage, culture, or circumstances.

Some cities, such as Lancaster whose Latino population was recorded in the 1990 census as 20.6%, have had success in creating new housing rehabilitation and home ownership opportunities within Latino neighborhoods. Much, however, still needs to be done to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation to prevent the loss of historic inner city building fabric and to make historic neighborhoods adaptable to the cultural needs of their new residents. Bringing together leaders from the Latino and preservation communities with city officials responsible for implementing historic designation and related programs is critical to increasing communication, furthering preservation efforts, expanding housing rehabilitation and home ownership programs within these historic districts.

With these goals in mind, Preservation Pennsylvania, the statewide nonprofit historic preservation organization for the Commonwealth, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Bureau for Historic Preservation proposed conducting workshops in Lancaster and Philadelphia, in the fall of 1997. With program and planning assistance from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office of

the National Trust for Historic Preservation and local organizations in the two cities, the framework for the workshops was developed, and a proposal submitted to the National Park Service for funding through the 1997 Cultural Resources Training Initiative grant program. National Park Service funding, which is supplemented by a grant from Mellon Bank, will support the implementation of the workshops as models for the development of similar programs in other cities with significant Latino or other immigrant populations.

The format for the day-long program begins with a look at cultural diversity and its role in our society today. The heritage of the Latino culture and the built environment is explored by an architect who grew up in a Latino neighborhood of North Philadelphia and whose Philadelphia architectural practice has experience in historic rehabilitations. The architectural heritage of Latinos also will be addressed by the keynote speaker, Arleen Pabon, the former State Historic Preservation Officer for Puerto Rico. From these introductions to both our shared and our differing architectural and cultural roots, panel discussions will bring representatives from the Latino community, city officials, and historic preservationists together to discuss a number of key issues. Panels will focus on the perception of historic preservation in the Latino community and the role that historic preservation can play in Latino neighborhoods; on funding for rehabilitation; and on neighborhood

*The Spanish American Civic Association (SACA) Development Corporation "Latin Quarter" Scattered Site Housing Project in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, received a 1996 Historic Preservation Construction Project Outstanding Achievement Award for Rehabilitation of Single Residential Buildings from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Northeast streetscape shown. Courtesy Preservation PA.*



revitalization efforts and enhancing community character.

The goal of the workshop is to increase understanding and sensitivity of preservationists to the culture and history of the Latino community; and of the Latino community to the benefits and advantages of historic designation to their neighborhoods. The issue for discussion pose questions that challenge preservation thinking about the impact a new immigrant culture may have on historic buildings. Should these buildings evolve and change and reflect the continuum of history and the people who have inhabited them? Must, or can, the 19th-century neighborhoods of our inner cities be restored as historically accurate monuments to the early immigrant populations who first inhabited them? The questions we

pose—Whose History? Whose Neighborhood?—are questions that will continue to push our thinking about our heritage and how we, as preservationists, respond to changing demographics and to the needs of our neighbors.

For information on the conferences, contact Susan Shearer, Preservation Pennsylvania, 257 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101, 717-234-2310.

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## The Hispanic Challenge

**T**he Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, located in the northeast quadrant of Jacksonville, Florida, will dedicate its new museum exhibits on October 11. The new exhibits are designed to make visitors aware of the significance in their lives of the major cultural and natural resources found within the Preserve's 47,000-acre authorized boundary. The exhibit change is directly tied to legislation passed by Congress in 1988 which specifically stated that the existing museum building at Fort Caroline National Memorial—established in 1953 and incorporated into the Preserve—will become the interpretive center for the Preserve. This designation effectively extends the interpretive theme to include not only natural history of the region but also the entire 246 years of Florida's First and Second Spanish Periods! Visitors will be exposed to a history for the most part not previously known.

For 40 years, interpreters at Fort Caroline concentrated on the significance of the French colony of La Caroline. As per the enabling legislation, only scant attention was given to the Hispanic presence in Florida during the years 1562–1569. Indeed, for the Memorial interpretive staff, the Huguenot (Protestant) French represented the “good guys” and the Catholic Spanish represented the “enemy” both historically and interpretively! An occasional reference was made to Pedro Menendez's invading force but usually visitors interested in the Spanish presence were directed southward to St. Augustine (San Augustin) with its Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments.

Two major events within the last 10 years have changed our “interpretive tune”—the Timucuan Preserve legislation and the Columbus Quincentennial. The latter has caused much reexamination of the Hispanic pres-

ence here in Florida, both historically and in modern times. A plethora of new books have been written and published, others long out of print republished and “rediscovered,” and a whole new generation of armchair historians, anthropologists, and archeologists created. Combine this with what the U. S. Census demographics have been stating for several years and all of a sudden the Pilgrims are history!

Previously non-interpreted historic sites associated with the Hispanic presence in La Florida and included within the boundaries of the Preserve are:

- Fuerte de San Gabriel, Fuerte de San Esteban, and Fuerte de San Mateo—each associated with the Spanish occupation of this area after the French were expelled in 1565;
- Catholic Franciscan Mission San Juan del Puerto de Mocama, 1585–1702;
- Fuerte Piribirriba, San Vicente Ferrer, and Dos Hermanas, mid 1700s.

Unfortunately for the interpreter and park visitor, nothing remains of any structures associated with any of these historic sites and only the location of San Juan del Puerto is known.

One of the biggest challenges that many non-Hispanic historic sites have today is the difficulty in interpreting the significance of their site to recent immigrants to whom the site's history has little relevance. With the tremendous influx of Hispanic immigrants to this country, the interpretive staff at the Timucuan Preserve will not have this particular problem. Our challenge will be the assimilation of 250 years of Spanish occupation of the peninsula.

How many people realize that not until the year 2052 will the United States have “owned” Florida longer than the Spanish?

*Paul Ghiotto  
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