

Introduction

Thirty years ago this month, a new era in the preservation of the nation's heritage began. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provided a basic organizational structure and tools essential to a national historic preservation program. The act conceived of the national historic preservation partnership, which today embraces states, Certified Local Governments, Indian tribes, federal agencies, the private sector, and individual property owners. The Act established the National Register of Historic Places, created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the system by which federal agencies survey and identify historic properties, and authorized matching grants for historic preservation surveys, plans, and projects. Through subsequent amendments and related legislation, the 1966 Act provides the essential framework and incentives that thousands of communities use to protect their unique identities and foster community revitalization.

The National Park Service is proud to administer core elements of the program with its partners. The 1966 Act and related legislation allows the bureau to fulfill its mission to "extend the benefits of cultural resource conservation throughout the nation." Through this legislation, the NPS offers a helping hand and touches numerous communities, regardless of proximity to a national park, and provides the means for them to use the tools in a manner that best suits their individual circumstances.

Thousands of success stories that grew out of this legislation could be cited. In this issue of *CRM*, we are presenting a sampling of views from individuals who represent key constituencies within the historic preservation field. Several of the authors were present at the time the legislation was passed. Others can testify to the enduring

effects of the 1966 Act on federal, state, local government, and private preservation activities many years after the act's passage. Although a broad range of views are represented in this issue, no single publication can capture the full magnitude of the nation's cultural resources, the totality of the benefits to the nation that grew out of the 1966 Act, or the many cities, towns, and rural areas that have joined in the partnership.

Long before "public/private partnerships" became the ideal for the operation of federal government programs, the National Historic Preservation Act was already doing just that—offering a range of tools that empower other units of government and the private sector to seize the initiative. Thirty years ago, Americans studied the historic preservation programs in other countries to determine how to develop a program. Today, the converse is true. Countries from around the world study the national historic preservation program in the United States as a model for encouraging private investment in historic preservation. No other nation can make such a firm claim to "A Model Partnership" in protecting its rich and diverse heritage.

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The 1912 yacht, Wendmeen, Camden, ME, was designed by the nationally-noted naval architect John G. Alden. The vessel is considered to be one of the earliest and best surviving examples of its design. The yacht was restored at private expense in 1987, after many years of neglect, and now serves as a coastwise passenger excursion vessel. The vessel was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its significance in naval architecture. Photo by Douglas Lee for the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.



The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was part of a cluster of conservation-oriented legislation that sought to redress the effects of environmental degradation, pollution, and the phenomenon of “future shock.” At the 1963 conference in Williamsburg, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and others planned for a more effective organization of the historic preservation movement. Three years later, the Special Committee on Historic Preservation of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (headed by the late Congressman Albert Rains and including Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson) produced the study, *With Heritage So Rich*. The study became the foundation of the Act.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and its amendments:

- conceived of the national historic preservation partnership;
- established the National Register of Historic Places that provides federal recognition of properties of state and local, as well as national, significance;

- created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation charged with advising the President and the Congress on historic preservation matters and working with federal agencies to address cultural resources in the fulfillment of their missions;
- fostered the system by which federal agencies survey and identify historic properties and use this information in project planning;
- authorized matching grants, now called Historic Preservation Fund grants, to states, Certified Local Governments, and Indian tribes (grants also support the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s efforts in the private sector);
- led to the federal historic preservation tax incentives to foster private sector rehabilitation of historic buildings and promote economic revitalization; and
- inspired federal agencies, states, tribes, and local governments to reinforce and enhance the national historic preservation program with additional tax incentives, grants, protection programs, and initiatives.



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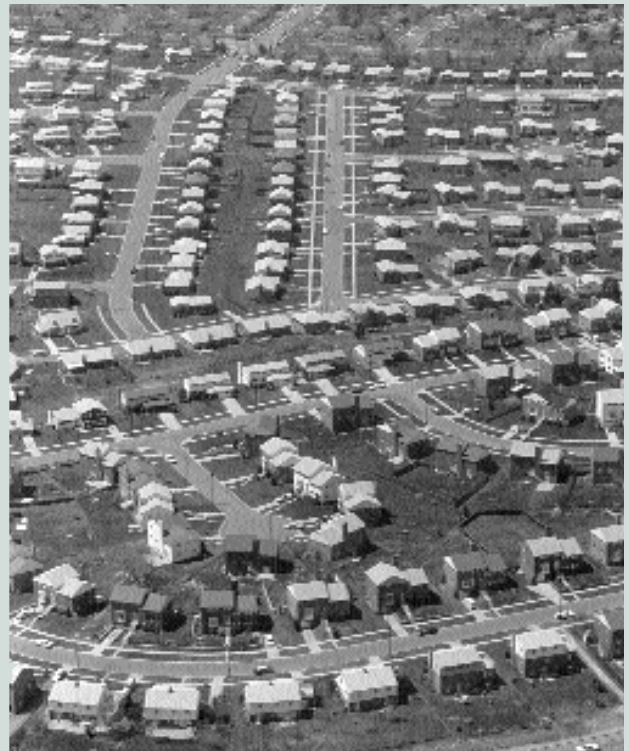


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The roots of the historic preservation movement in the United States date back nearly two centuries. Individual, private organizations, and later, governments at all levels, took action to preserve significant historical and archeological properties. Despite their best efforts, many historic buildings, neighborhoods, and sites were lost. After World War II, the pace of change intensified. Major highway construction, public works projects, urban renewal, and suburban sprawl ripped the fiber of countless communities. Photos courtesy Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, U.S. News & World Report Magazine Collection



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