

## **ROLE OF THE APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS IN HISTORICAL RESTORATION**

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In order to give an idea of the role the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments has undertaken in the area of historic preservation, I want to talk around three spheres of Council of Governments historic preservation program activities and then give you some idea of the role the Council of Governments sees for historical societies in developing the historical resources of the region.

Council of Governments' activities in historic preservation date back to 1970 when the South Carolina Department of Archives and History began its preparation of a statewide historic preservation plan. In looking around for the best way to prepare this comprehensive plan, which identifies capital-resources-needs in historic preservation and sets priorities on public capital improvements of historic places, the Department of Archives and History decided to contract for this work with the regional planning districts including the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments. In February, 1971, I was hired by the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments to prepare the inventory of historic places. At that time, I asked all the historical agencies in the six counties of Appalachian South Carolina for their assistance. This society responded by appointing a research team led by Mrs. Mildred Whitmire. She and Mrs. John Charles, Miss Josephine Cureton, Mr. and Mrs. John Gilreath, and Mr. John McDavid, surveyed over a hundred historic places in Greenville County and contributed over \$1,500 worth in-kind service to the financing of this inventory. In addition, Mrs. C. B. Dawsey, Mr. Joseph H. Earle, Jr., Mr. Norwood Cleveland, Mrs. T. Charles Gower, Mr. Thomas Inglesby, Miss Katherine Jones, Mrs. Joan B. Little, and Mr. Sam Zimmerman surveyed additional sites or provided valuable information that upped Greenville County's in-kind contribution to \$1,600 of the \$7,000 total in-kind contribution needed from the six-county region as a whole in order to finance the inventory phase.

When this inventory was completed, the Department of Archives and History decided to contract the planning phase through the regional planning councils. The South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments again called on the fourteen historical organizations in the six-county region and asked each to name a representative to a Historic Preservation Task Force which would develop a preservation philosophy, analyze preservation problems, and set priorities for development of historic places. Greenville County organizations sent Mrs. Mildred Whitmire and Mr. Charles Thomas to this Task Force. On the basis of recommendations by the Task Force a 172-page plan was completed and approved in June 1972 by the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments.

Since the approval of this plan, it has been necessary to restructure the committees of the Council of Governments in order to deal more effectively with the recreation, historic preservation, and tourism development activities of the Council of Governments. This process was completed in October of last year when the new Leisure Resources Committee had its first meeting. Sub-committees had their first meeting in November to deal with problems in tourism development, recreation resources, and cultural resources including historic places. The Leisure Resources Committee is now engaged in a comprehensive leisure resources planning process which will update the 1972 Historic Preservation Plan as a part of a more general Leisure Resources Plan which should be completed by July, 1975.

In order to understand the context of Leisure Resources Planning, let me briefly describe the overall organizational structure of the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments. First and at the top of the structure of the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments organization is the Council itself: a 42-member body of people from the six Appalachian South Carolina Counties -- Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg - of which twenty-one members are local elected officials -- delegation members, county council members, Mayors or Council members -- and the remainder are appointed by local elected officials. The Council of Governments members from Greenville County are:

(1) Representative Nick Theodore, (2) County Councilman Mack A. Ashmore, (3) Mayor Sam Forrester of Mauldin, (4) City Councilman Vardry Ramseur, III, (5) S. Welton Smith, (6) Former Congressman Robert T. Ashmore, (7) Dr. Robert Williams of Greer, and (8) Mr. Ralph Anderson.

At the second organizational level of the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments is its technical and citizens committees. There are eight technical and citizen committees which have input into the policy making process in the fields of:

(1) education, (2) leisure resources, (3) regional planning and economic development, (4) rural development, (5) housing, (6) public safety, (7) resources for the aging, and (8) coordination of human resources services.

In addition to these committees there is the South Carolina Appalachian Health Council and its staff which functions as the technical advisory committee for health programs for the Council of Governments. Finally, the Council of Governments has its own staff which are provided solely for assisting the Council of Governments and committees to accomplish their mission which is to strengthen local governments and to get greater local governments.

But why should a body like the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments continue to be interested in historic preservation? Why is historic preservation a concern of local governments? This leads to a consideration of preservation philosophy. In the 1972 Historic Preservation Plan, the Council of Governments agreed with the Historic Preservation Task Force when it said: "The most fundamental aspect of historic preservation is its value in preserving and maintaining a common memory of the past among the divergent views of local history of the individual citizens."

Preserving historic buildings when done faithfully to the original material of the structure destroys many cherished legends about the opulence or in some cases about the poverty of the "good ole days." I remember the first time I saw Monticello. I had seen the Biltmore House many times before and I guess I expected Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, our third President to reflect the same sort of late nineteenth

century elegance. At first I was a little disappointed, then I began to sense the clarity of vision which is reflected in Jefferson's classical design that is missing from the Vanderbilts' mansion which draws tidbits from here and there and turns out more fantastic than visionary: the medieval looking dining hall, the Spanish leather bedroom walls, and the collections of artwork and furniture that reflect the image of American industrialists collecting the best of European culture. Jefferson's house by contrast places European culture in a new context and attempts to define a distinctively American culture. In comparing the two buildings one senses the massive shift in American outlook that occurred in roughly one hundred years. I sensed a new awareness of the changes that the self-understanding of America's elite, if you will, went through as a result of the industrial revolution. Finally after I saw Monticello I went to see the James Monroe house and imagine my surprise. Monroe was less visionary man, a very practical man in the ordinary sense of that word. His house consequently is more "ordinary" without attempting to disparage it, than Jefferson's. And in the comparison between Monticello and James Monroe's house I saw the tension between the Jeffersonian vision and American reality at the turn of the eighteenth century. My images of that period of history were completely shifted and I began to sense the humanity, the radically mundane aspects of life in that time. A similar experience happened when I visited Walnut Grove in Spartanburg County. I had expected a house that had all the signs of roughing it on the frontier. And I found a simple house to be sure. But within that simple house were a number of items that showed that the Moores were very civilized and reflected late eighteenth century culture. These shifts in perception are what we are out to create in historic preservation.

I think that the Task Force showed a critical insight when they designated the giving of objective content to the community's common memory as the most fundamental function of historic preservation in a local community. This insight opens a whole cultural area which is necessary to the life of the community, essential to the community life as much as the economy of the community or the water system or the churches are to the community. In short historic preservation aids in articulating

the story without which our community would not be a community. Furthermore, I am convinced that the story a community tells to itself about itself is more crucial to the future of that community than any sort of economic planning, governmental modernization, land use planning or what have you. Let me give an example. Have you ever visited or lived in a community that told itself a story something like "We're just a little old mill town." Have you seen what happened to that town? You know that chances are that that town will stay "a little old mill town" until the mill leaves which is just catastrophic for that town, or until they invent a better story.

There once was "a little old mill town" that had at one time before a war been a resort town for summer visitors from other areas. One day the leaders in this town decided that that "little old mill town" was the Textile Center of the World. They *decided*, I mean *they* decided that that "little old mill town" was the Textile Center of the World. Now there wasn't the sort of objective data that said that ninety percent of the world's textiles were made in that town or anything like that. And there were probably as many textile mills in some town overseas as there were in this town. And the neighboring towns sort of gave this town the old ha-ha and that sort of thing. Even some of the leaders of the town weren't so sure. Some of them nearly choked on their words so that it came out at first like "This Town is the Textile Center of the South." But years passed and guess what? This community woke up one day and discovered that they had an International Textile Exposition every year and that not only were there ordinary textiles being made but also synthetic textiles and even textile machinery. But my story doesn't end there. After a hundred years the citizens of this town looked back and tried to discover how they got to be the Textile Center of the World. They looked for textile mills and found a few small thread mills had been there a hundred and seventy-five years ago and then came larger and larger mills until there was the magnificent industrial complex they saw around them. Then they looked at other towns in the vicinity and they saw little thread mills becoming larger and larger mills until there was a magnificent industrial complex, and they began to ask themselves, "Now, just how did this little old mill town become

the Textile Center of the World?" Then they looked into the future and they say that more and more textiles were being made in new nations overseas and they began to be afraid. How much longer could they be the Textile Center of the World? And then they looked back into the past again and saw that their town could have equally been the Vineyard of the World, or the Automobile Capital of the World, or the Resort Center of the World and they began to ask themselves "Now just how is it that this community can contribute to human civilization?" And they say that this was the question all along. Here my story must end because the leadership of this town has not decided what its role will be in the Twenty-first Century. But I am convinced that this decision will rest as much on the story that this community tells itself about its history as on market forecasts.

In this context historic preservation provides the artifacts, the raw data, and the legends (1) which provide basis for the symbols, the epics, and the stories which make local community life exciting, (2) which allow the citizens of the community to appreciate the history of their community as their own history, (3) which improve the quality of life by giving meaning to the everyday events and by placing these in valid geographical, social and historical context, and (4) which allows every person in the community to create the models for the future of the community by tapping the humanity and wisdom in the past. Historical organizations have unique possibilities for dealing with their communities in this kind of depth, and at the same time maintain the avocational nature of historic preservation. Such an approach keeps alive the support of people who are involved in historic preservation as a hobby and yet involves them in significant programs and projects which change their perspective.

Strong local preservation programs such as those on in Charleston, Pittsburg, Annapolis, or Savannah involve the economic, the cultural, and the political dynamics of preservation. The economic dynamic deals with raising money, financing, developing the resources for programs and preservation projects. In this six-county region this function is most effectively institutionalized in organizations like Anderson Heritage, Inc. and the Foundation for Historic Restoration in the Pendleton Area. The cultural dynamic includes the educational

process as it relates to historic preservation. Involved is someone learning in a societal context about local history or methods of researching local history or preservation techniques or preservation philosophy. Anywhere a community articulates its story, tells about epic events, celebrates its past, preserves artifacts and buildings, then the cultural dynamic within historic preservation is operative. At a more so level whenever you see a community carrying on or reappropriating past patterns of relationships between the generations, or family structure, or the organization of social roles form past patterns of organization, you are seeing the cultural dynamic of historic preservation going on. The historical society can be the structure through which this happens when its potential is realized.

The political dynamic has to do with planning and development of historic places, structuring state and federal laws and local ordinances to promote historic preservation, acting as applicant for federal funds, and overseeing the priority setting process. In this six-county region this might be seen as the function of county-appointed historic preservation commissions. However, there is a great gulf between the human story waiting to be preserved and the actions required of historical societies, foundations and commissions. What is needed to bridge that gulf is a system of tactics through which the historic preservation dynamic can become a part of day to day community life. It starts with a committed leadership. The most committed are the professional persons whether paid or not who give their whole lives to preserving historical data -- these are technical resources and the core of leadership. Next are those who articulate the community's story -- the historical research groups -- and those who develop practical bricks and mortar methods of preservation - the amateur and professional archivists, curators, preservation craftsmen, financial wizards, archeologists, fund raisers, and preservation contractors. Impact projects may be restorations, historical programs, celebrations or whatever. They are what lets the community know their story and the unique perspective such projects can bring to general community problems. A secondary function of impact projects is recruitment of the troops needed to accomplish preservation programs and projects.

The key to identifying potential impact projects is the regional, state, national, and international historic preservation organizations to which your society belongs. Your society already participates in the historic preservation program of the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments. It is also a member of the Confederation of South Carolina Historical Societies. The Society should be active in these organizations letting the COG Leisure Resources Committee know of your plans, programs and needs for assistance, and sending as many participants as possible to the annual Landmark Conference of the Confederation. There are national groups capable of offering additional assistance. The National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Association for State and Local History are two key groups worth joining. As programs progress these groups can become outlets for new insights into methods of historical research and/or preservation methods which will allow the methods developed in local projects assist other historical organizations in their programs and projects. The interchange function of all these organizations is finally what gives them their power in assisting historic preservation groups.

The third tactical system is demonstration projects. This is where new methods are developed which graphically illustrate for the community the wisdom of the work.

The fourth tactical system is advanced training. Anyone serious about historic preservation needs to familiarize himself with the current methods of historical and genealogical research, caring for historic objects, preserving and restoring buildings, financing preservation and so forth. Many groups have seminars, training sessions, and other programs of advanced training. Resources are available to do similar sorts of advanced training right here in Greenville.

Finally in discussing an effective model for historic preservation a word needs to be said about the planning methods for putting concrete content on the tactical systems and deciding the most effective institutional arrangements for holding the historic preservation dynamic. First, one must define how historic preservation activities are currently operating. A helpful way of doing this is to list out all the general problems of the



community then categorize problems into groups to see which problems affect different aspects of the historic preservation program. Once the problems and the operating context clear, examination of problems will make possible the definition of immediate goals toward solution of the central problem. A helpful way of doing this is to specify on a four year time line what problem immediately to be addressed and the two tactics to be used each year to move the situation along. Finally, the leadership must not move until commitments of time and resources and schedules where and when work is to happen are secured. Then historic preservation becomes a reality.

Now the method I have sketched should be familiar because it is used implicitly in any decision that is ever made. Where it becomes a useful tool is when the assumptions, goals, and tactics are made explicit and judged as a total system in light of their effectiveness. The question for a historical society is not "What programs would be nice to have in the next year?" but "What programs need to be presented in the next year in order to create public support for historic preservation and an awareness of our community's story?"