DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

PRESERVATION POLICY FOR THE SMITHSONIAN

Over the past five years OAHP has had the responsibility of developing a working Smithsonian Preservation Policy. We started with a law, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended in 1980. This we set in the context of the obligations we have as stewards of the property we oversee. Another obligation we recognize is that as part of the nation's largest museum we must care for all museum objects in a professional manner including its significant buildings. We are now ready to give form to the developing preservation practice of the Institution in the form of a written Preservation Policy.

Just as law, in our system, is developed from precedent, so is good public policy. Major precedents have been established by the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation which are the national guidelines for rehabilitating historic buildings. Preservation directives are given in the form of standards against which each situation is measured. Some are obvious, such as "Distinctive Features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved". Others are more specifically defined only by consideration of the specific building, such as the standard which states that "The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved." Over time, it has become apparent that loss of specific details and alteration of the aspects of a building which define its character constitute unacceptable changes to historic buildings.

We are developing our guidelines for the practice of preservation from the Secretary of Interior's Standards and from our own precedents. Some of our precedent setting cases have been the restoration and renovation of windows in the Smithsonian Building, the renovation of the north foyer of the Museum of Natural History, the accessibility ramp to the South Tower entrance of the Smithsonian Building, and the design of drop-off railings at the south entrance to the Museum of Natural History. Among the over 600 windows of the Smithsonian Building, 385 which our research showed to date before 1914 were restored while later windows were replaced using the design and proportions of the original designs by James Renwick. Drop off railings at the south or Mall entrance to Natural History were based on a design done by the architects of the building only a few years earlier for railings in the Arts and Industries Building.

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Several cycles of review and redesign were necessary before we came up with a solution to the accessibility problem on the south side of the Smithsonian Building which would not detract from the character of the building. We have established from these precedents the importance of retaining original fabric, of using of factual information as a base for decisions regarding every aspect of design down to finishes and lighting fixtures, and using negotiation to achieve successful solutions to non-preservation problems such as accessibility and technical updates.

As the Preservation Policy will be the policy of the whole Smithsonian, the development of the Policy will be done by a representative group of Smithsonian people. Amy Ballard of OAHP is leading a cross functional team with the mission of evolving a policy based on both the obligations and the needs of the Institution. Other members are, Mel Adams (OPPlantS), Warren Danzenbaker (OPS), Jan Majewski (Smithsonian Access Coordinator), Larry O'Reilly (NMNH), Beverly Lang Pierce (A/S for Museums), Garrick Smith (OEMS), and Bill Thomas (ODC). Meetings will be held on the first Thursday of every month in an appropriately historic location, the Regents' Room of the Smithsonian Building. As Amy Ballard said in her introductory memorandum to team members "With all of us working as a team, I feel sure that we will devise a policy which will serve everybody's interests."

OAHP is a team devoted to preservation practice and policy within the Smithsonian. The team includes research scholars, preservationists, and conservationists. The aim of OAHP is not only to develop and administer policy, but also to train members of many other offices in the Smithsonian to be responsible for both policy and practice. This training is ongoing in the joint activities of OAHP members with all branches of the Facilities Services Group.

The development of our preservation practice has been accomplished by people with varied responsibilities coming together to determine reasonable solutions. Each situation has called for a team approach. Our preservation policy team is a step beyond the case by case situation. In the course of developing the Smithsonian policy the preservation policy team will incorporate the process of working together to satisfy the needs of program and preservation.

THE A.I.C. IN INDIAN COUNTRY

During the first week of June, Rick Stamm and Peter Muldoon, the OAHP Castle Collection staff, traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico for the annual meeting of the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (the AIC). With the meeting set in the heart of the old Southwest, the General Session opened with a focus on the conservation of sacred objects. The tension between the sacred perception which spawns the creation of a sacred object, and the essential secularity of the professional conservator whose mandate is to preserve an object in perpetuity, made for fascinating discussion.

A topical theme in Albuquerque was the encounter of native American and immigrant American cultures in the museum. Presentation
speakers encouraged the partnership of museums with the cultures they study. They invited a collaboration that allows for the continual development of a culture including access to sacred objects and addressed the issue of the repatriation of native American artifacts.

Speakers discussed the nature of the sacred. They discussed the connection of the sacred dimension with the sacred object, the cultural context of the object's origin, intended use, and acquisition by a museum collection. These issues spurred lively conversation throughout the conference ranging from religion to the nature of conservation, and touching upon the nature of knowledge itself.

Afternoon sessions focused on another topic of significance for the Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation: museum collections in historic structures, and the problems of climate control. Richard L. Kerschner, Chief Conservator of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, presented "A Practical Approach to Environmental Requirements for Collections in Historic Buildings." Mr. Kerschner suggested that the acceptable ranges of humidity and temperature for collection care are more elastic than originally prescribed by the conservation community. Efforts to achieve an ideal state of stable temperature and relative humidity for a museum collection can be detrimental to an historic building, especially in a temperate climate. Therefore it is necessary to seek a balance of concern for the collection and the historic structure.

Kate Burns Ottavino, Associate Director of Preservation Design for the architectural firm of Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut and Whitelaw, delivered a very different paper on the adaptation of the historic U.S. Custom House in New York City, for the George Gustav Heye Center, National Museum of the American Indian. Ms. Ottavino described the designing of an internal shell, or "building within a building". The plan to create an "ideal" museum environment caused a brisk rustle of skepticism among conservators concerned about its impact upon the building.

Friday's day-long business meeting provided the opportunity for the Castle Collection's non-voting staff to pursue an architectural field trip. Rick and Peter visited two native American Cliff Dwelling sites, Puye and Bandelier Canyon. Both sites have similar structures which include modern reconstructions, but the handling and management of the sites provided a rich contrast. The Bandelier cliff dwellings, operated by the National Park Service since the 1930's, feature many amenities added to the dwellings by the Work Projects Administration such as handrails, poured concrete steps, and even cast cement rocks. Puye, operated by the Santa Clara Indian Pueblo, is less altered and retains a more natural appearance. The visitor climbs the stone steps carved by the original inhabitants, clinging to the rocks for support. The only impurities at Puye are small wooden signs that designate points of interest to be followed in a walking tour brochure. Although both sites offer an experience of sublime beauty, the staff was more impressed with the site treatment of Puye.

The collective memory of the human family is our culture. Preservation of human experience is at the root of knowledge, language and culture, and some of this memory is preserved in the collections of museums and historic sites throughout our nation and the world. The conservator's view of preservation is more than a concern for sites and objects, but a concern for the intelligent progress of the human family. The annual meeting of the AIC is a vigorous forum for conservators and anyone concerned with the memory and progress to exchange ideas and information.

ODC'S VINCE COGLIANO:

INFORMATION CONDUIT FOR THE SI SOUTH GROUP

Each Smithsonian building has one person from the Office of Design and Construc-
tion as its project manager. The project manager oversees all design and construction projects in his or her designated building and tracks their progress. ODC’s project managers, all professional architects or engineers, include: Tee Allen (NMAH, Silver Hill, Springfield, National Postal History and Philatelic Museum and Anacostia), Don Dormstetter (NMAH, MSC and Fort Pierce), Bob Ridgley (NASM, Silver Hill, SAO and SERC), Paul Rasmussen (AAPG, HMSG, Renwick, and the General Post Office), Fernando Pascal (STRI), and Loren Raap (Cooper-Hewitt, NMAI facilities and the Administrative Service Center). Vince Cogliano is the project manager for the two oldest Smithsonian buildings, the Smithsonian Building or "Castle" and Arts and Industries, as well as the Freer and Quadrangle; collectively they are known as the "South Group."

During a brief break from his rounds, Vince described his job as project manager. "Basically, I coordinate all ODC projects through the entire process of planning, design and construction," says Vince. The formal name for this process is the OM 789 Review. This review process begins in any Smithsonian office that desires any kind of design and construction work. "The customer lets us know their needs," explains Vince. "I meet with a planner in ODC to develop a scope of work, putting down on paper the details of the project and the budget." Vince then distributes the scope of work for the project to all Facilities Group offices, the office which requested the work, and the building manager and building director for their expertise and input.

Vince gathers all the comments on the scope of work, making sure they are integrated rather than at odds, and ensures that the comments are incorporated into the final scope. Drawings are then developed and circulated to the previous reviewers. Depending on the complexity of the project, several sets of drawings may be reviewed before the final design is approved by all parties.

After work begins on a design and construction project, Vince keeps careful track of its progress. The importance of this role is evident in the weekly construction meetings arranged by Vince for the Castle. At the meetings, problems are aired among the staff and solutions are discussed. "I'm the person to contact for any questions and complaints about a project," smiles Vince.
From student days at the University of Maryland where he received his degree in Civil Engineering, Vince has always been interested in architecture. "My first job was with the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency," reflects Vince. "I became interested in the buildings, the history of some of the city's little neighborhoods and the planning of Washington." That interest Vince brought with him on arrival at the Smithsonian twelve years ago.

As a Project Manager for the South Group, Vince can become familiar with some of Washington's most prominent buildings. "I've spent most of my time in the Castle and A&I buildings - they're my favorites. They are interesting buildings because they're unusual and National Historic Landmarks. They have unique problems, especially in the construction area," explains Vince.

The responsibilities of a project manager are great. For example, Vince has been tracking two major projects in the "Castle." The first is the repair and restoration of over 600 windows in the Castle to a diamond-pane configuration as envisioned by its architect James Renwick. The second is the repointing of the Seneca sandstone facade, a stone unique to the Washington, D.C. area and somewhat fragile. Both jobs require Vince to balance the need for accuracy and quality with the need to keep projects "on track." Vince oversees their daily progress and ensures that work is performed with a minimum amount of disruption to staff. "The challenge of my job is to get all the work done to minimize the impact on the building's programs," says Vince. OAHP looks forward to seeing the results of Vince's careful attention to these major undertakings.

**OAHP'S SUMMER INTERN**

Kristin Hall, a recent graduate of Bowdoin College, is OAHP's summer intern. Her major project is preparation of a paper on the implications of an African American museum on the Mall. The focus of this project is to consider moving such a museum into the Arts and Industries building in the context of historic preservation issues. In her research, Kristin has considered the needs of museum programs, the African American communities, and historic preservation issues. Questions that she has had to address range from conceptualizing the museum space itself to considering the impact of the design on the historic fabric of the building. The final product will be a paper of use to the many different branches of the Smithsonian involved in the embryonic stages of planning this museum.

As an African American studies and History double-major, Kristin had an ideal background to undertake such a project. Her knowledge of historic preservation issues was acquired during an internship with the National Trust in 1990. In one phase of that internship she worked for the Atlanta Preservation Society. In another phase her time was dedicated to composing historic designation reports for the Urban Design Commission, which regulates alterations made to the interiors and exteriors of Atlanta's designated historic neighborhoods, individual homes, and public buildings.

OAHP and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Museums have contributed to making this project rewarding. Claudine Brown, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Museums, who also served as Project Director of the African American Institutional Study, has been a key resource in Kristin's project. Kristin attended weekly conferences with Ms. Brown and several interns and fellows who were assigned projects relating to the proposed museum. With the assistance of two offices and many individuals, the summer was one of discovery and enjoyment.

**OAHP "CASTLE" COLLECTION**

**BOSTON DROP-LEAF TABLE**

- SL88.10
- BOSTON ca. 1830 - 1840
One of the first problems that museum people must deal with when cataloging a new accession to a collection is to determine the object’s proper name or form. The search for the proper term may seem an easy task at first; however, many similar objects have different names based on slight variances in detail or function. One example of this conundrum can be illustrated by comparing the subtle differences between two similar types of drop-leaf tables: the Pembroke table and the Breakfast table. The Pembroke Table is defined as the most elegant variant of the drop leaf table. It is characterized by hinged leaves supported by brackets which are hinged to the frieze (or apron) of the table. The Breakfast Table, on the other hand, is described as a variant of the Pembroke Table characterized by its lightweight and mobility. It usually includes a drawer, shelf or cupboard below its leaved top. The Breakfast Table is simply the smallest, most elaborate form of Pembroke Table.

A drop-leaf table in the Castle Collection (fig. 1), though similar in form to the Pembroke or Breakfast Table popular in the eighteenth century (fig. 2), differs from these forms for several reasons. Although it has hinged leaves supported by brackets which are also hinged and a drawer below its top, the table is neither small, lightweight, nor elaborate. Furthermore, this table is a single pedestal table while the Pembroke Table characteristically has four individual legs. By process of elimination we can arrive at the most appropriate name for the table; we simply refer to it as a drop-leaf table.

The Smithsonian’s drop-leaf table is comprised of a top and apron mounted to a truncated obelisk pedestal and base supported by four scroll feet. These distinctive scroll feet are similar in design to those which appear on several labeled Boston pieces designed in the first half of the nineteenth century by the cabinetmaking firm of Isaac Vose & Son. The top is fitted with hardware underneath one leaf to enable the table to be joined end to end with another like table to form a large double pedestal banquet table, yet another feature distinguishing this table from the Pembroke varieties.

This table, made to be used with a set of chairs also in the OAHP Castle Collection (see Smithsonian Preservation News, Spring, 1991) was purchased for the collection in 1988 for use in the Secretary’s Meeting Room on the second floor of the Smithsonian Building. Like the chair, reproductions of this table are being manufactured as part of the Century Furniture Company’s licensed “Smithsonian Collection.” The reproductions can be seen in furniture showrooms around the country and proceeds from the sale of this and other pieces from the collection go toward future acquisitions for the collection.

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