



Historic Preservation

BASIC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW

The objective of historic preservation is to protect, stabilize, and maintain the existing materials and structure of historic places while preserving the heritage value of the structure. Stuart Dean Craftsman and historic restoration teams focus on the original materials while repairing and maintaining surrounding elements to match the existing.

Thoroughly understanding the actions and process necessary to undertake any type of historic preservation project is crucial in identifying, maintaining and protecting a building, statue or landmark's heritage value. Having the depth of knowledge of the issues facing each unique preservation project impacts the entire project. Proper planning and proven methods coupled with expert execution ensure a successful outcome and desired result.

Historic preservation or heritage conservation is a professional endeavor that seeks to preserve, conserve and protect buildings, objects, landscapes or other artifacts of historic significance.¹ Other names for the discipline include urban conservation, landscape preservation, built environment conservation, built heritage conservation, object conservation, and immovable object conservation; however, historic preservation is generally used in reference to activities in the United States and Canada. As used by practitioners of the endeavor, "historic preservation" tends to refer to the preservation of the built environment, and not to preservation of, for example, primeval forests or wilderness.

A historic district in the United States is defined as a group of buildings, properties or sites that have been designated by one of several entities on different levels as historically or architecturally significant.² Buildings, structures, objects, and sites within a historic district are normally divided into two categories, contributing and non-contributing.

Historic districts greatly vary in size, some having hundreds of structures while others have just a few. The U.S. federal government designates historic districts through the U.S. Department of Interior, under the auspices of the National Park Service. Federally designated historic districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic districts allow rural areas to preserve their characters through historic preservation programs. These include "Main Street" programs that can be used to redevelop rural downtowns. Using historic preservation programs as an economic development tool for local governments in rural areas has enabled some of those areas to take advantage of their history and develop a tourism market that in turn provides funds for maintaining an economic stability that these areas would not have seen otherwise.

As published in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, there are three conservation approaches defined as follows. The issued standards are of the utmost importance to a building owner when applying for federal grants or tax credits, or other similar assistance on most historic properties.³ Following the standards is usually required for approval on these programs, and having a complete understanding of each method, may be a key factor in tapping into resources to assist with your historic preservation project.

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Preservation: the action or process of protecting, maintaining, and/or stabilizing the existing materials, form, and integrity of a historic place or of an individual component, while protecting its heritage value. Preservation can include both short-term and interim measures to protect or stabilize the place, as well as long-term actions to retard deterioration or prevent damage so that the place can be kept serviceable through routine maintenance and minimal repair, rather than extensive replacement and new construction.⁴

Rehabilitation: the action or process of making possible a continuing or compatible contemporary use of a historic place or an individual component, through repair, alterations, and/or additions, while protecting its heritage value.⁵

Restoration: the action or process of accurately revealing, recovering or representing the state of a historic place or of an individual component, as it appeared at a particular period in its history, while protecting its heritage value.⁶

Historic buildings and institutions are preserved for as many reasons as they were built. With regard to historical preservation, most buildings are restored and protected based on the geographical region, age, artistic and aesthetic value to the owner, community, and connections to historic events and people in history. Historic buildings are landmarks of past generations as an integral part of the neighborhood.

Depending on what historical time period, and the events that took place in the building, the type of work needing to be performed will typically fall under preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation.

THE BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Besides the many incentive programs offered by local state governments, historic preservation impacts the economic climate of all states. The re-investment into these historic preservation programs generates millions of dollars towards income and state wealth. (i.e., Gross State Product or GSP).⁷ Historic buildings also create interest in the states they are located, fueling tourism dollars and creating jobs, which attract thousands of visitors to historic sites. According to The National Register of Historic places, designated historic properties and areas that are designated as such create a culturally significant and positive community impact by using expert preservation techniques.⁸

Pride of ownership is also a powerful reason many people and corporations invest in and commit to the preservation of a historic building or property. Historic designations reversed the trend of neglecting and abandoning older commercial buildings and residential houses to attracting urban pioneers who restored these buildings and stabilized the neighborhoods. As this trend continued, historic districts restored confidence in the area. Adjacent neighborhoods began to improve and started a ripple effect in the next layer. What were slums 20 years ago are now prestige neighborhoods. The community pride historic preservation instills in those who live and visit historic areas is all part of the effort and pursuit of maintaining significant historic events and people in history. Proper historic restoration and preservation takes a lot of skill and knowledge and in the end, touch the lives of all who perform the restoration and those who come to admire the beauty.

Preserving historic buildings is an essential to understanding our nation's heritage. In addition, it is an environmentally responsible practice. By reusing existing buildings, historic preservation is essentially a recycling program of "historic" proportions. Existing buildings can often be energy efficient through their use of good ventilation, durable materials, and spatial relationships.⁹ An immediate advantage of older buildings is that a building already exists; therefore energy is not necessary to create new building materials and the infrastructure is already in place. Minor modifications can be made to adapt existing buildings to compatible

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new uses. Systems can be upgraded to meet modern building requirements and codes. This not only makes good economic sense, but preserves our legacy and is an inherently sustainable practice.

Some practical and/or intangible benefits of historic preservation include: the retention of history and authenticity, commemorates the past and shows an emphasis on the aesthetics, craftsmanship and periodic design and style. Also, pedestrian and visitor appeal, increased commercial value, preserving materials and ornaments that are not affordable or readily available such as durable, high quality materials (e.g., old growth wood) and the rehabilitation often costs less than new construction. Reuse of the original infrastructure is highly recommended.

The Secretary of the Interior established Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to promote and guide the responsible treatment of historic structures and to protect irreplaceable cultural resources. Today, the Standards are the guiding principles behind sensitive preservation design and practice in America. Stuart Dean employs skilled craftsmen who understand, adhere to, and have the ability to execute these standards.

The preservation process involves five basic steps: Identify, Investigate, Develop, Execute, and Educate. Successful preservation maintenance and design requires early and frequent consultation with a variety of organizations and close collaboration among technical specialists, architects, owner/occupants, and preservation professionals.

CAUSES OF BREAKDOWN

Causes of Breakdown on Historical Landmarks and Buildings

Many factors contribute to the countless deterioration problems facing historic buildings. Age and natural deterioration from interior and exterior elements such as weather and even the faintest rays of the sunlight, have proved to speed the breakdown of metal, stone and wood used in a architectural element in any building design. All substrates must be restored periodically, and maintained on a continuous basis to prevent finish breakdown.

A weather-tight roof is basic in the preservation of a structure, regardless of its age, size, or design. In the system that allows a building to work as a shelter, the roof sheds the rain, shades from the sun, and buffers the weather, shielding most substrates below it.¹⁰

During some periods in the history of architecture, the roof imparts much of the architectural character. It defines the style and contributes to the building's aesthetics. The hipped roofs of Georgian architecture, the turrets of Queen Anne, the Mansard roofs, and the graceful slopes of the Shingle Style and Bungalow designs are examples of the use of roofing as a major design feature.

But no matter how decorative the patterning or how compelling the form, the roof is a highly vulnerable element of a shelter that will inevitably fail. A poor roof will permit the accelerated deterioration of historic building materials - masonry, wood, metal, plaster, paint - and will cause general disintegration of the basic structure.

The old myths of "no maintenance is better than poor maintenance" and "it's supposed to look old and worn, that's how nature intended it to be" are just that...myths.

Exterior airborne pollutants, rain water and other contaminants allowed to dwell on any surface to long will begin to break down protective finishes. Abrasion caused by normal wear and tear, scratches, chips and dents will allow moisture to penetrate and become trapped under the protective finish. Thus furthering the erosion of historic architectural elements and creating sometimes irreversible damage.

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A protective finish should never be put over any architectural substrate without professionally cleaning the service. With regard to cleaning historical buildings, greater care and special attention must be paid to surrounding areas, and the area being restored before any type of service is performed.

Timber has long been used in building construction. It is the most useful material available for wall, floor, roof and other structural framing.¹¹ All commercial timbers can be classified into softwoods (such as Pine, Fir, and Damar Minyak) and hardwoods (such as Chengal, Meranti, and Kapur), depending on the characteristics of their grains, weight and moisture content. In general, timbers either of softwoods or hardwoods have a moisture content of between 12 to 15 percent.

Stone has been used in building construction for thousands of years. Due to its natural durability and strength, stone is used for structural columns, exterior walls, staircases, window framing as well as roofing materials. Stone comes in different types and properties ranging from the hard impervious such as granite, slate, marble to the softer and pervious sandstone and limestone. Although stones will last for many hundred years, its tendency of decay in any kind of weather is possible. Such weathering occurs in three situations. First, the attacks from soluble salts especially when it comes up from the ground where there is no damp course, in locations near seas or from a heavily polluted atmosphere.

Secondly, trouble arising from the slow build-up of soot deposits and dust, leading to possible onset of decay due to small vegetation organisms, and lastly and most importantly, the straight forward erosion by wind and rain. Stone will become saturated when it is exposed excessively to driving rain. As a result, its surfaces become marked and rough. Besides weathering, stone may also decay through faulty materials and workmanship.

Like timber, stone or brick; plaster tends to deteriorate over a period of time. Plaster normally contains lime, sand and water; and sometimes chopped animal hairs to give tensile strength. Plaster is used widely in decorative panels, ceiling renderings, cornices, and internal walls. Causes of deterioration include direct exposure to driving rain, condensation, evaporation, air pollution, aerosols, capillaries, thermal stresses, vegetal causes, insect attacks, animal and human activities. Plaster may become cracked due to either shrinkage or movement in the substrate. Shrinkage usually occurs early in the life of the building but substrata movement and lack of maintenance is often the reason for failure in historic situations.

Buildings that are located near the sea or rivers tend to have common building defects. This is because the water coming from the ground causes dampness penetration and structural instability. In addition, soluble salt which comes from sea and together with the presence of a polluted atmosphere can cause damage to the exterior surface of the buildings. Any historic building, with an emphasis on those located on coasts with tropical climates and salt water must be preserved and maintained.

SOLUTIONS

The Stuart Dean Company has been providing preservation, rehabilitation and restoration services to historical buildings and landmarks for more than 80 years. Regularly scheduled and adhered to cleanings will ensure substrates are returned to the best possible condition.

Each historic structure and property is unique. Before work begins, at project initiation, a thorough understanding must be had by all working on the project to achieve the desired outcome. This includes making sure that the proposed function for the historic property is compatible with the existing conditions in order to minimize destruction of the historic fabric. Generally, the least amount of change to the building's historic design and original architectural fabric is the preferred approach. To develop a treatment plan, site assessments are

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conducted to identify character-defining features and qualities. These assessments also examine the building or property as a whole to establish a hierarchy of significance, or “zones,” corresponding to specific treatments. Zoning establishes preservation priorities.

Of concern to preservation and design professionals is the cumulative effect of seemingly minor changes over time, which can greatly diminish the integrity of a historic building. Major preservation design goals include updating building systems in historic structures, which requires striking a balance between retaining original building features and accommodating new technologies and equipment. Building system updates require creativity to respect the original design and materials while meeting applicable codes and tenant needs. The accommodation of new functions, changes in technologies and the improved standards of protection provide challenges to the reuse of historic buildings and sites. Designers must address life safety, seismic, and security issues in innovative ways that preserve historic sites, spaces and features. Stuart Dean takes all of these facts into serious consideration before recommending the best course of action.

Work on historic buildings, landscapes, archaeological sites, or other cultural resources requires knowledge of a unique process of compliance and review. This process differs from work on existing buildings or on new construction and should be considered in concert with other project goals requiring close collaboration between preservationists and design disciplines. To ensure a balanced, economically viable, and preservation-sensitive project, a written treatment plan is outlined and followed. A key factor in preserving a historical building for many years to come is the routine maintenance schedule that should be adhered to for best results.

For the long-term preservation of a historic property, it is very important to understand its history before any preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration begins. We at Stuart Dean must understand the history and entire scope of work, plus our client’s expectations before beginning the project. The most important things you should know before beginning any type of preservation project are as follows: When was it built? With what materials and methods was it built? Who was the architect or designer? What are its architectural characteristics or features? Are these features unique in some way? What is their condition and will they be lost if not repaired in a timely manner? Are original drawings or other planning documents for a building still available? Has the building changed over time? The answers to most of these questions usually involve archival research to verify the original appearance of the building and site will be helpful in establishing preservation priorities and in preparing treatment alternatives.

Two terms commonly used in historic preservation are important to keep in mind: the “historic character” and the “integrity” of a property. Historic character is, in essence, the things that make a building special—its “visually distinctive features, materials, and spaces,” for example, or the architectural styling of a structure or its unique methods of construction or craftsmanship. Integrity refers to whether or not a building retains these important character-defining features and has not been inappropriately changed over time. The historical preservation craftsman teams employed by Stuart Dean provide services backed by many years of expertise and excellence.

Stuart Dean is a pioneer in the field of historical preservation. We provide critical services that extend the life, increase the value, and enhance the beauty of architectural assets. Stuart Dean provides customized solutions tailored to meet each client’s individual needs. A national team of experts specialize in one point of contact, customized ongoing contracts and project-based work. Stuart Dean provides ease of service to companies with single and multiple locations in need of solutions that deliver consistent outcomes, and effective and cost-effective preventative solutions. Stuart Dean employs a team of dedicated, experienced professionals that have helped restore and maintain thousands of national and historical landmarks, government facilities, and museums across the country.

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We are pleased to provide you with a sampling of clients we have partnered with and performed historical restoration for, for more than 80 years.

- Boston Public Library
- Canadian Consulate General
- City Hall, Charleston, South Carolina
- City of Boston, Trust Office
- City of Charlotte
- City of Los Angeles
- City of Santa Monica
- Cleveland Public Library
- Dewey Monument, San Francisco
- Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas
- Harold Washington Library, Chicago
- Kings County Courthouse, New York
- Los Angeles City Hall
- Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
- Los Angeles Public Library
- Metropolitan Government of Nashville, Tennessee
- National Institute of Health (NIH)
- Philadelphia International Airport
- Port of Seattle
- State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU)
- The City of Beverly Hills
- The United States Mint
- The White House
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- U.S. Customs House, Charleston, SC
- U.S. State Department
- Boston Museum of Fine Arts
- Chicago Art Institute
- Chicago Symphony Hall
- City of San Francisco Art Commission
- Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, College Park, Maryland
- J. Paul Getty Museum (The Getty Center), Los Angeles
- Phoenix Art Museum
- Providence Performing Arts
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- The Academy of Music, Philadelphia
- The Art Institute of Chicago
- The Forrest Theater, Philadelphia
- The Kennedy Center, Washington D.C.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia
- The Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles

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References

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7. http://www.wbdg.org/design/historic_pres.php
8. <http://www.hbp.usm.my/conservation/SeminarPaper/DECAY.html>
9. http://www.wbdg.org/design/historic_pres.php
10. <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/TPS/briefs/brief04.htm>
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