

Looking Forward: Preservation in New England in the Twenty-first Century

Historic New England, founded as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in 1910, is entering a second century of service to the public through the preservation and presentation of New England heritage. Its founder, William Sumner Appleton (1874-1947), formed the Society because, at the beginning of the last century, no other group made the preservation of New England antiquities “its sole object.” Appleton’s vision of leadership in the preservation of noteworthy buildings and historic sites has grown to encompass 36 house museums and landscapes, more than 100,000 objects of historical and aesthetic significance, over 1 million documentary items, and 76 privately-owned easement protected properties in five of the six New England states, making Historic New England the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive regional heritage organization in the nation.

As Historic New England embarks on a new century of service and leadership in historic preservation, “Looking Forward: Preservation in New England in the Twenty-first Century” convenes a new generation of today’s preservationists and challenges them to articulate a vision for what is to be preserved in New England over the next 100 years. What issues will shape historic preservation in twenty-first century New England? In a sense, what would a latter-day Appleton do to preserve New England heritage today? The symposium will focus on four themes of twenty-first century historic preservation in the New England region: Evaluation and Assessment, Integrity and Treatment, Advocacy and Activism, and Sustainability and Beyond.

The “Looking Forward: Preservation in New England in the Twenty-first Century” symposium is sponsored by Historic New England in recognition of its Centennial anniversary and in partnership with Roger Williams University, Bristol, Rhode Island. The symposium will be held Saturday, October 1, 2011, at Roger Williams University. The program will include keynote speaker [TBD].

“Looking Forward” welcomes individual papers and panels on any of the following four themes as they relate to historic preservation in twenty-first century New England:

Sustainability and Beyond

While all building preservation is inherently sustainable, global energy imperatives will play an increasingly critical role in decision-making about historic resource preservation. How does New England’s adaptation and use of its natural landscape continue to inform the architecture and historic resources of the region? Preservation planners, architectural conservators, cultural resource managers, museum and architectural curators will be challenged to establish regenerative solutions and a working model for sustainable preservation.

Integrity and Treatment

The pace of generational change in the built environment quickened over the last third of the twentieth century while construction methods, building materials, and architectural design tested the limits of technology and structure. Traditional concepts of integrity and conservation now confront relativistic and fluid definitions of authenticity and appropriateness. How are New England’s cultural resources to be preserved and maintained in a time of economic fragility and

in a fiscal setting that encourages obsolescence and the rapid amortization and replacement of the built environment?

Evaluation, Assessment and Interpretation

As the resources of the twentieth century become historic, preservation professionals face a proliferation of data about the physical environment and its material culture context. Archival access to pre- and post-modern documentary sources increases exponentially. How will preservationists utilize and refine data and assess content to interpret and present New England's heritage to a twenty-first century public? Typically viewed as a bastion of establishment culture, New England is also a center of intellectual ingenuity: can New England's history of adaptation and innovation help inform the standards and criteria by which preservationists judge significance?

Advocacy and Activism

How will twenty-first century preservationists mobilize New England constituencies to translate advocacy into action? In an increasingly fragmented and niche-driven culture, what is the nature of activism and who are preservation's constituents? What are today's stories of New England heritage and how will they be integrated with our region's dominant historical narratives?

Eligibility:

Paper proposals may be submitted by undergraduate and graduate students and recent graduates in: historic preservation, architectural history, landscape preservation, material culture studies, historical archaeology, architectural conservation, building technology, preservation planning, preservation law, cultural resource management, folk studies and folklore, vernacular architecture, or museum or architecture curatorship on any aspect of historic preservation in New England.

Individuals currently enrolled in or who will have graduated in the last five years (2006-2011) from an academic program in historic preservation listed in the National Council for Preservation Education Guide to Academic Programs in Historic Preservation, are eligible to submit paper or panel presentations and will receive consideration ahead of individuals currently enrolled or recently graduated (2006-2011) from none-NCPE programs.

Selection Process:

Paper proposals will be selected by the Program Review Committee of preservation academics and professionals for presentation at the "Looking Forward" symposium. It is the intention of the committee to make selected revised and expanded papers available on line following the conference.

Abstract should be between 300 and 500 words and must be submitted no later than March 1, 2011. Abstracts should contain the author's name(s), postal and e-mail addresses, and telephone and fax numbers at the top of the page. Papers will be selected based on thoughtfulness, organization, and how well they address the focus of the individual symposium theme chosen. The Program Review Committee reserves the right to request modifications to the proposals.

Authors will be notified by April 1, 2011 if their proposed paper has been selected. For those selected, complete drafts of the papers, 10 to 12 pages in length will be due June 15, 2011 for review by the selection committee. The committee reserves the right to request modifications to the draft. Final papers will be due on August 15, 2011.

Submissions:

Inquiries and abstracts should be sent to: Sally Zimmerman, Manager of Historic Preservation Services, Historic New England, Lyman Estate, 185 Lyman Street, Waltham, MA 02452-5645 or szimmerman@historicnewengland.org. Abstracts may be submitted electronically or in hard copy no later than 5 PM, Tuesday, March 1, 2011.