

# ASHIP NEWS

Volume Two, No. 1

Fall 1989

## NORTHWEST PEAK LOOKOUT, MONTANA

by Donna Hartmans

Northwest Peak Lookout is located in the extreme northwest corner of Montana, near where the Montana, Idaho, and Canadian borders intersect. The lookout cabin is a type L-4 U.S. Forest Service structure, built in 1929. The 14 foot square building was designed to either be mounted on top of tower legs or, as in this case, erected directly on the ground. Northwest Peak Lookout is literally tied to the top of the 7700' mountain by four steel guy wires. The lookout was abandoned in 1955 and has suffered the ravages of time and weather.

What is the historic value of this lookout or any other lookout, whether it be in Montana or anyplace else in the United States? In the first place, it is a building type that is nearing extinction. You might say that fire lookouts are on the endangered list. Secondly, these buildings represent an important era in forestry history.

The 1930s-1950s were the heyday of fire surveillance from mountaintop lookouts. During this period there were over 5000 such lookouts across America, over 3000 of them in the northwestern states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The technological advances of aerial surveillance in the 1960s and the carving of excessive logging roads brought about the demise of lookouts. Today there are probably less than 500 in various states of repair, with only 100 or so used on a seasonal basis.

I visited many fire lookouts this past summer as part of an historical survey for Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service. Fire lookouts represent a generation of security for our forest resources, but their future is uncertain. Adaptive reuse is one possibility. A few have been resurrected in Montana as part of the "Cabin Rental Program", through which an individual or group can rent the lookout for a day or week and experience life on a mountaintop. Sadly though, many lookouts fall victim to the conflict between cultural and natural resources. For example, if a lookout is located within grizzly bear habitat, the bears win. Grizzlies, an endangered spe-



Northwest Peak Lookout, Montana view to the Southwest

cies, are being reintroduced in some areas of Montana, and the Forest Service does not feel it can promote the restoration of fire lookouts for adventure seekers if their paths will cross a grizzly's. An even more disturbing fact is that many lookouts are torched by the Forest Service purely to prevent public liability problems.

One might ask, are they worth saving? If fire lookouts are an historic resource that few people experience, why be so concerned? Well, did you ever stop to think of what other culture, for whatever reason, so prolifically established a mountaintop building type such as this? To understand the magnitude of what has been lost and the fragility of the lookouts that remain, I recommend the book *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest* by Ray Kressek. It provides an excellent guide to these mountaintop jewels as well as humorous anecdotes about the era in which they were built.

## THE SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS: Understanding Master Plans

by Christine Taylor

Preservationists, who traditionally focus on saving individual buildings, are beginning to pay more attention to contextual issues as they realize the importance of the setting and relationships of buildings to one another. The setting is especially important where an overall plan was envisioned, as in the case of a campus, a complex, or even a city grid. In some ways, preserving the intent of a master plan is more critical to the preservation of historic character than the preservation of its

individual buildings, the whole being greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Preservationists, architects, city planners, and historians need to understand how to identify an historic plan's significant features. Many people in the field are more comfortable working with buildings and, tend to characterize a plan by using the same features which characterize buildings. An overall plan, however, is much more than the architectural features of the buildings set within it. Attention should be focused on how the buildings relate to one another and what features characterize the spaces between them. For example, arcades are used throughout the Stanford University campus plan. They are not important simply because of their connection to the buildings, but rather because of the way in which they link the campus spaces together and integrate the buildings with the outdoor spaces. Understanding the intent of the overall spatial design plays an important role in identifying how to preserve the historic character created by a plan.

Furthermore, the features which characterize an historic plan do not remain static. One should not necessarily adopt the first plan and attempt to recreate it. It is probably more useful to identify patterns of development over time and assess the main threads which were carried out, identifying and relating the different periods of growth to one another. This will also clarify the conflicts which exist among different planning schemes.

As individuals concerned with preservation become more comfortable with the contextual issue and understand the characteristics which define overall plans, they will begin to gain the attention from preservationists which they deserve.

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## THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS!

A year ago, a group of preservation students here at University of Oregon formed the first chapter of the Associated Students of Historic Preservation. ASHP was seen as the start of a national network of preservation students, and we began putting out this newsletter as a way to reach you. This year we hope to move forward toward our goal on several new fronts.

Here at the University of Oregon we are seeking better funding by becoming a recognized student organization. To that end we have been working to create a set of bylaws for ASHP. By January of 1990, copies of our bylaws should be available for schools inter-

ested in starting ASHP chapters of their own. If you are interested, please contact us.

Another of our goals is to start compiling a data-base of the thesis and research paper topics being pursued across the country. If you would like to share your topic with lots of other students, please fill out the form below and send it in. The first list of titles will appear in the next ASHP newsletter.

To conclude, I would like to thank all of the preservation students at the University of Oregon who are working so hard to get ASHP permanently established. We believe that preservation education is critical to the standards and philosophies of the profession. It is important that we as students join together, nationwide, and share our resources and opinions, so please lend us your voice.

Happy Holidays to All

Jill MacDonald  
President, ASHP

## EDITORS' NOTES

The baton has been passed on to us by the previous editors, who have done a wonderful job getting the ASHP News off to a fast start. We, who will try to carry on and expand their efforts, greet you with fresh enthusiasm. We plan to build on the foundation of Volume One as follows:

1. The News will run at least one review of a national conference in the fall issue. The current issue profiles the "Building the West" conference held in Reno, Nevada, in September.
2. We will have a book review in each issue, which will introduce current publications. The emphasis will rotate among building, landscape, and artifact concerns.
3. As mentioned in the President's Note, the winter issue will initiate a Thesis Topic list. We are contacting a number of graduate preservation programs directly for this information, and asking for submissions by individuals as well. The list will be updated once a year.
4. The News will publish opinions from both professionals and students in the field. Our aim is to hear and share your expectations and comments on the state of the discipline.
5. We hope to profile at least one professional preservation organization in each issue, e.g. a state preservation office, with an emphasis on their hir-

ing policies, office structure, and outlook for jobs.

6. We will continue to print articles, photos, and information bulletins as we receive them. We are happy to hear your suggestions and opinions. We are off and running until it is our turn to pass on the baton to the next editors.

Sohyun Park Lee

To Our Readers, Greetings, I am Dave Skilton, and with Sohyun I'll be ASHP co-editor for the 1989-90 academic year. We hope to be bringing you three fine issues of the News in the next six months.

When this organization formed here last year, it was partly out of a sense of frustration. Our program is the smallest, (21 students), of eight departments in a large, thriving school of Architecture and Allied Arts. All around us we can see active chapters of the student groups attached to national professional organizations like the American Institute of Architects, the American Society of Interior Design, and American Society of Landscape Architects. Because these student chapters are able to call on the goodwill, and to some extent, the financial resources of their parent organizations, they form national networks of the students in their disciplines. Their members hold national conventions, sponsor national competitions, have national input in their chosen fields, etc. As far as we can tell, no such network yet exists for the students of Historic Preservation.

So, we thought we'd start one.

A newsletter seemed like a good way to begin, so being the convivial bunch we are, we've held bake sales, looked around for topics of interest, written articles, and brainstormed a mailing list. Now, with our fourth issue, we are trying to turn this newsletter into a more national forum. All this is done in the hope that it can one day merge with other forces we don't even know about yet, into a truly national organization for the students of our discipline.

As a result, we are asking again for your input, especially if it comes from outside our own region, the Pacific Northwest. So don't be surprised if you get a call, and for heaven's sake don't be shy. What projects are you working on back there in New York, Florida, Wisconsin, Texas, or Tennessee? We love to get mail, and we love to pass on your news. Write us at:

ASHP  
P.O. Box 3407, University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403

community's resources and will serve to be the most important tool for developing effective plans and projects.

The Appendix provides ample National Sources of Assistance and it is rewarding to find such a complete list of suggested readings that are arranged to complement the contents of the seven chapters. This is a book that can be used by planning departments, preservation professionals, grassroots organizations, and universities. It does nothing less than increase my awareness of how unique man's role has been in establishing a sense of place and cultural identity across this vast nation.

## OPINION: HISTORIC PRESERVATION AS RELIGION: MUSINGS OF A NEWCOMER TO THE THEOLOGY

by Timothy Netsch

Timothy, called as a disciple of the faith, to all the saints who are working diligently for the cause of historic preservation. Grace and peace to you from the Father, Thomas Jefferson, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

I must confess to you, brethren, a spiritual battle being waged within me as I begin this, my first term of academic study in historic preservation. Our cause is the rescue of the living past from destruction. "Mission" is often the term with which we refer to our work, and indeed it is a mission. I think few of us would argue against the proposition that historic preservation is a noble, virtuous, and maybe even righteous discipline.

Simplistically, our opponents are greed, in the form of money-hungry developers; selfishness, exhibited by vote-seeking politicians; sloth, from those who prefer the convenience of demolition over rehabilitation; impatience in the person of those unwilling to occasionally decelerate to the rhythm of the past; and short-sightedness, practiced by he who is unable to see the value of beauty and history.

It seems easy to identify what we are fighting against, a bit harder to articulate what we are fighting for. I think there is something enabling about a building possessed with integrity, and I don't believe a person has to be particularly sensitive to feel such a thing. If we can preserve an atmosphere that is pure enough to hear the past speak--where one is compelled to walk at a pace slow enough to listen as an old house imparts its wisdom upon our times, we become advocates of peace and reflection--things badly needed in our world. The nos-

algia we feel for a building that has remained a constant through inherent change is, I think, the seeking of a sense of permanence, a foundation in which security can be found.

So what is this conflict I speak of? I always saw my spiritual beliefs and historic preservation as allies. The philosophies seem so parallel to each other. What I strive for in my religion--the qualities I seek to learn and the characteristics I want to possess--love, wisdom, purity, selflessness--have their counterparts in historic preservation. But I find the two competing, not cooperating.

In the preservationist's impassioned commitment to the cause, might not such devotion possibly degenerate into self-deception, or even idolatry? Historic preservation is not as all-inclusive as I want my theology to be, yet the concept of salvation tugs at my train of thought. Salvation is not a motivation for my actions, but I do find historic preservation a natural manifestation of my belief system. I wonder about its ultimate value. Save Your Soul--Save a House! I'm not really sure it works that way!

But heck, I'm new at all this. I'm curious to see how my feelings evolve--if rationality soon sets in and I'm embarrassed to think these words were printed. Choose your judgement: hopelessly green, idealistic as Pollyanna, or just stupid. But needless to say we all feel that historic preservation means more than saving old stuff because it's real cute. History is a teacher and a prophet, weaving its way through society, time context, and culture. From it we may learn of the nature of man, and gather clues about Truth and the Divine. Historic preservation seeks the maintenance of particular mediums of history's record. It is scripture of a certain language.

And what if its significance goes well beyond what we usually consider? Beats me, but it's worthy of thought. May you grow in the faith and knowledge of our discipline. Amen.

ASHP News is the publication of THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION, PO Box 3407, Eugene, OR 97403. We actively seek articles, news, reports related to the decline of historic preservation. Submissions should be sent to Dave Skilton or Sohyun P. Lee, editors.  
C ASHP

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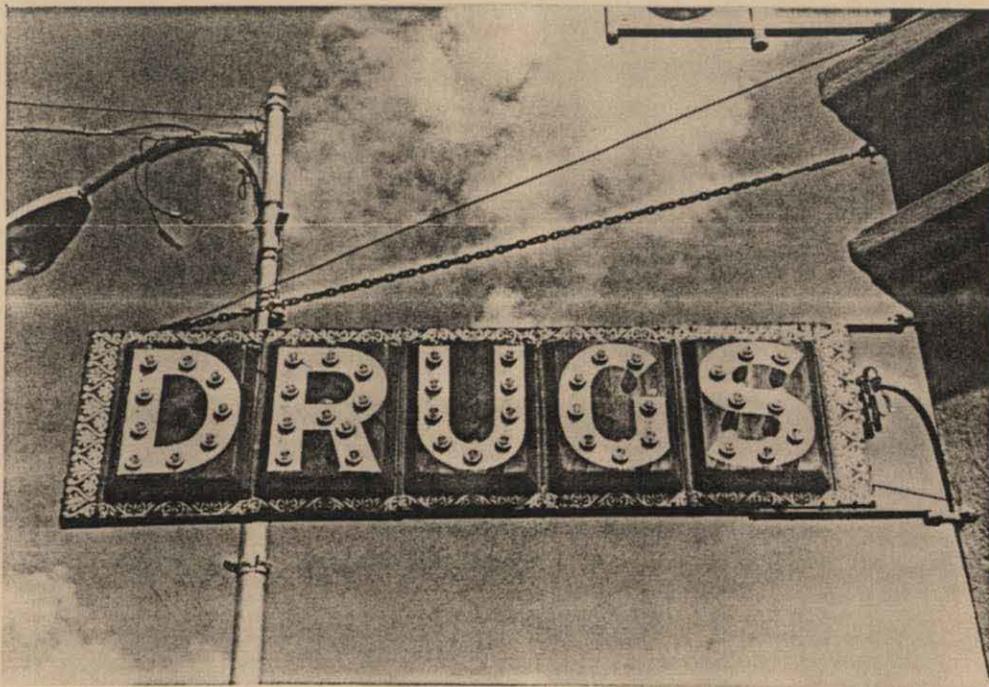
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Short Abstract:(limited to 400 words)

The Associated Students of  
Historic Preservation(ASHP)  
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You've Got  
the News!



Exposed incandescent bulb sign, Chapman's Drug Store, Roseburg, Oregon, "... often historically significant signs are threatened by modern sign code regulations." George H. Kramer, *Preserving Historic Signs in the Commercial Landscape: The Impact of Regulation*, MS Thesis, University of Oregon, 1989.