

# THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY



From the first rude shelter to the first modern skyscraper, the buildings erected in this country reflect the architectural tastes, resourcefulness, and mode of life of the American people. Because they serve as historical links connecting past and future generations, it is important that records be made of American buildings which are of historic and architectural significance.

Since 1933, the Historic American Building Survey has gathered drawings, photographs, and documentation for a national architectural archive. The program is administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior, and conducted in cooperation with the American Institute of Architects and the Library of Congress, which is the repository of the records.

The HABS collection has become a major source of information on buildings which have disappeared, such as the Montgomery Block in San Francisco. Built in 1853, on a foundation of redwood logs, the "Monkey Block" became a thriving commercial center and bohemian haven for American writers including Samuel Clemens, Bret Harte, and Jack London. It was torn down in 1959. Nothing remains of the building except the records made by the Historic American Building Survey.

### CONGRESSIONAL POLICY

Congress created the National Park Service in 1916 to promote and regulate the national parks and other designated Federal areas in accord with their "fundamental purpose . . . to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same . . . by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Under subsequent laws, the National Park Service has been given major responsibilities for historic preservation. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 establishes a "national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States." This act authorizes the National Park Service to conduct surveys; secure and preserve drawings, photographs, and other data on historic buildings; enter into cooperative agreements with States, associations, or individuals; and to develop an educational program of information concerning historic buildings.

The National Park Service is authorized to publish studies and otherwise encourage the preservation of historic properties not owned by the Federal Government. This act also provides for the acceptance of donations from institutions or individuals.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY

When the National Park Service began the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1933, architects, draftsmen, and photographers were employed under several Federal relief programs to compile a graphic record of the Nation's historic buildings. This was the first major step by the Federal Government toward the cataloging and preservation of historic structures. By the end of 1934, more than 5,000 sheets of drawings and more than 3,000 photographs had been made of historic buildings throughout the Nation. Many of these buildings have since been destroyed.

In 1934 the National Park Service entered into an agreement with the American Institute of Architects and the Library of Congress to conduct the Survey on a permanent basis. Under this agreement, the National Park Service administers the planning and operation of the Survey with funds appropriated by Congress and supplemented by gifts from individuals, foundations, and associations. The National Park Service is responsible for setting up qualitative standards, organizing the projects, and selecting subjects for recording. It directs the preparation of the records, catalogs, and places them with the Library of Congress. The Library preserves the records, makes them available for study, and supplies reproductions through its Photoduplication Service. The American Institute of Architects provides professional counsel through its national membership and aids the program in many ways.

The Historic American Buildings Survey became a long-range program under the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and continued operations until 1941. Although the Survey was inactive from 1941 until 1957, the collection continued to grow through donations of drawings and photographs from individuals, universities, and members of the American Institute of Architects. The National Park Service also contributed records of structures under its care.

In 1951, teams of student architects, supervised by professors of architecture, began to record National Park Service buildings during the university summer recess. This program continued and expanded; the major portion of the Survey's recording is now done by such teams.

In 1953, a HABS inventory form was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in cooperation with the National Park Service and the American Institute of Architects to facilitate the recording of large numbers of historic buildings; in 1962 it became an integral part of the Survey.

With the passage of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the responsibilities of the National Park Service in this field were greatly increased. This act enlarged the protective inventory of historic properties by expanding the National Register to include places of State and local, as well as of national, significance. Matching grants-in-aid to the States for historic site surveys and preservation were authorized.



### CURRENT PROGRAMS

Today, the National Park Service, through HABS, conducts a broad national program of intensive architectural surveys on a shared-fund basis in cooperation with State and local governments, preservation groups, and historical societies. The Service works closely with groups and institutions which have an active interest in recording historic structures and gives priority to projects in areas where there is active concern for historic landmarks.

The program moves forward primarily through comprehensive area surveys, photo-data projects, specialized projects, and by contracts with individuals and organizations. Historic buildings are recorded by detailed studies which include measured drawings, photographs, and architectural and historical data. The material is deposited in the HABS archives in the Library of Congress and published in State and local catalogs.

The national program of the Historic American Buildings Survey includes the following: annual measured drawing projects which employ student architects and university faculty supervisors during the summer recess; HABS inventory recording projects conducted to evaluate large areas; architectural photogrammetry recordings of skyscrapers and buildings of complex design; projects in industrial archeology undertaken in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution; historic district studies; landscape architecture recordings to document the historic character and environment of buildings; and civil engineering projects to record important engineering works in cooperation with the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The Survey's aim of "preservation through documentation" is of particular importance for historic buildings threatened by demolition or alteration. Priority is given to such buildings, and they are recorded whenever possible. Though documentation is by no means a substitute for a building's continued use in the community, it does provide a permanent record for the future. Local interest in a threatened building is often generated by recording operations and Federal recognition. Both factors frequently aid in the preservation of menaced buildings.

### CRITERIA

The Historic American Buildings Survey is concerned with the collection of information that architects, historians, preservationists, and others will find useful. Its purpose is to record an almost complete résumé of the building art by including all construction types, all use-types, and periods of all regions of the country.

Architectural merit and historical association constitute the basic criteria. Buildings may have important associations with great historic figures or have been the scene of stirring events. Structures may illustrate an architectural type of period, or represent the work of known architects, buildings, or craftsmen. Evidence of coherent, consistent planning and design, harmonious proportions, good scale, well-designed interiors, fine detailing, and skilled craftsmanship serve to indicate the architectural value of a structure. Buildings are selected which are significant in the development of architecture regionally or nationally, or which illustrate distinctive historical contributions of cultural or ethnic groups.

Buildings which have remained in their original condition are recorded because they precisely illustrate a given period. Their value is further enhanced if the setting and auxiliary buildings also remain unchanged. A building which has had many additions, especially when its history is known, illustrates a whole sequence of periods and styles, and can be important to the Survey for that reason.

Structures unique in design or detail or which are surviving examples of a period or style are of interest, as well as neglected building types such as factories, railroad stations, or office buildings.

HABS takes into account such new directions of concern as urban design and architectural periods which have previously attracted little attention, such as modern architecture and buildings associated with the automobile and aviation age.

When buildings are selected for recording, history and architecture may be given equal weight. Buildings with important historical associations may have little or no architectural interest; the reverse may also be true. If two buildings are of equal architectural interest, preference is given to the one with the most known history. HABS prefers to record structures about which the most facts are known, or are likely to be uncovered, in order to assure the most complete national records possible.

### THE RECORDS

The Survey archives in the Division of Prints and Photographs of the Library of Congress contain more than 30,000 measured drawings, 40,000 photographs, and 10,000 pages of documentation for more than 13,000 historic buildings. These are comparable to similar archives established for many years in European countries.

One of the largest collections of its kind in the world, the Survey archives contain many types of records: precise measured architectural drawings, professional photographs, architectural and historical documentation, photogrammetry, and maps. Records from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are included. The accent is on permanence; every effort is made to make the records as long-lasting as possible with a view to centuries of public use.

The public is encouraged to make wide use of HABS records, which may be used without restriction, although the courtesy of a credit line is requested.

Survey documents have found wide use in the restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings. They have been used extensively by the National Park Service, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, as well as by private architects, historical associations, institutions, publishers, and scholars. The photographs and drawings have been reproduced frequently in scholarly books and architectural folios, as well as in newspaper articles, illustrated catalogs, and publications of historical societies.

Copies of the records may be ordered from the Photoduplication Service, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. Estimates should be obtained from the Library's Division of Prints and Photographs before ordering. In general, ozalid prints of drawings are 35 cents each; 4- by 5-inch and 5- by 7-inch contact prints of photographs, \$1.25 each; and photostats, \$1.85 for four pages of data. Xerox copies of data are 60 cents each for the first five pages and 16 cents for each additional page. A minimum charge of \$2 is made for each type of reproduction. The mailing charge is 25 cents. Copies of newer records not yet deposited in the Library of Congress are available from the National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Photographs and drawings are available on loan from the National Park Service for public exhibitions in museums, universities, and regional meetings of historic preservation groups. The Service will also cooperate with organizations which plan to assemble special exhibits.

Duplicate collections of the records in the Library of Congress have been purchased by libraries, historical associations, and local governments. The National Park Service encourages the establishment of such duplicate collections, since research is thereby greatly simplified, and the educational value of making the findings known to the public is enhanced. The Service can provide, at cost, microfilms of duplicate collections by States or for the complete collection.

## HABS PUBLICATIONS

Several detailed catalogs listing HABS records are available, including an old national series and a new series of revised and expanded State and regional publications. Other publications include a documentary series begun in 1966.

The national catalog, published in 1941 with a 1959 supplement, is widely available in main libraries. In 1968 these volumes were reprinted and paperback copies are available at \$3 each from the Clearinghouse for Federal, Scientific, and Technical Information, 5285 Port Royal Rd., Springfield, Va. 22151. The order numbers are: PB 177-632, 1941 catalog; PB 177-633, 1959 supplement.

A new series of expanded and revised catalogs of the Survey records by individual State and urban areas is being prepared, generally in cooperation with State organizations. The catalogs are well illustrated, and are being prepared for all areas of the United States on a priority basis.

Catalogs currently in print and available are:

*Chicago and Nearby Illinois Areas*, 1966, Prairie School Press, 117 Fir St., Park Forest, Ill. 60466. \$1.50.

*District of Columbia*, 1968, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 20240. Free.

*Massachusetts*, 1965, Massachusetts Historical Commission, State House, Boston, Mass. 02233. 50 cents.

*Michigan*, 1967, Historical Society of Michigan, 2117 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104. \$1.

*New Hampshire*, 1963, New Hampshire Historical Society, 30 Park St., Concord, N.H. 03301. \$1.

*Wisconsin Architecture*, 1965, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. \$2.25.

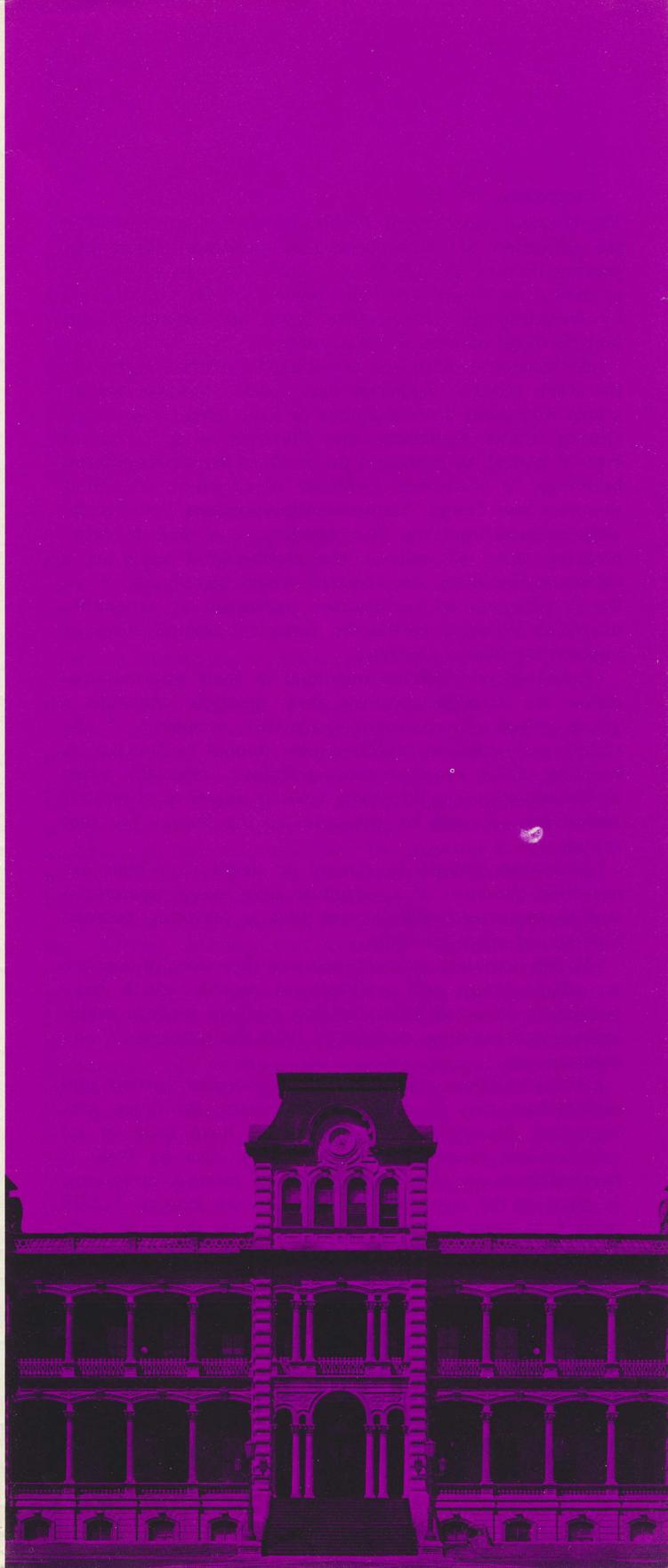
Documentary publications reproducing the architectural and historical data of selected areas are issued from time to time. These include:

*Georgetown Commercial Architecture—M Street*, 1967, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 20240. Free.

*Georgetown Commercial Architecture—Wisconsin Avenue*, 1967, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 20240. Free.

*Georgetown Historical Waterfront*, 1968, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. 70 cents.

*Historical Architecture of the Virgin Islands*, 1966, out of print.



## RELATED PROGRAMS

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 directs the Secretary of the Interior to expand the National Register, authorized by the Historic Sites Act of 1935, to include places of State, regional, and local significance as well as those nationally significant places qualified for designation as National Historic Landmarks.

This act provides certain safeguards against damage by Federal undertakings for all properties included in the National Register and a grant-in-aid program to assist in their preservation. It also authorizes the establishment of an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation composed of Federal department heads, the Chairman of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and citizens appointed by the President.

While the National Register includes places of national, State, regional, and local significance, Landmark designation is the unique status accorded limited numbers of properties meeting the stringent criteria of national significance. All properties eligible for National Historic Landmark status, whether the owner applies for the formal designation or not, are entered in the National Register as soon as the Secretary of the Interior finds them of national significance.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ARCHEOLOGICAL PROGRAM. Archeological research and protection are other major responsibilities of the National Park Service. Prehistoric ruins were among the earliest areas set aside for Department of the Interior protection. The Antiquities Act of 1906 provided the Department with initial protective and research powers in respect to archeological resources. The Act of 1916 creating the National Park Services charged that agency with protection of historic resources in the National Park System. The Historic Sites Act of 1935, the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960 and the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 greatly broadened these responsibilities.

The Service now conducts a program of salvage archeology where highway construction, dams, pipelines, and other projects threaten sites rich in prehistoric or historic data. A large proportion of the archeological fieldwork in this country is conducted under the Inter-Agency Archeological Salvage Program, sponsored by the Service.

THE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to make a survey of historic sites and buildings to identify those of national significance. Potential landmarks are evaluated by the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, and are recommended to the Secretary of the Interior.

Sites and structures found nationally significant by the Secretary are eligible for designation as National Historic Landmarks. Upon the owner's agreement to adhere to accepted preservation precepts, this designation is recognized by the award of a bronze plaque and a certificate. The program began in 1960.

Properties eligible for landmark designation are listed in a booklet entitled *National Parks and Landmarks*. Studies leading to the selection of National Historic Landmarks are published in a series of books. The booklet and the books are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. (Write to that office for pricelists.)

THE NATURAL LANDMARKS PROGRAM. The first areas in the Register of Natural Areas were designated in 1964. This program is similar to that of the National Historic Landmarks. Natural areas considered of national significance are cited by the Secretary of the Interior as eligible for recognition as Registered Natural Landmarks, regardless of ownership. At the Secretary's invitation, the owner may apply for a certificate and a bronze plaque designating the site.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION LANDMARKS. The third part of the National Landmarks Program was started in 1968. These Landmarks are designated for use of schools and the general public for teaching the principles of environmental awareness.

OTHER PROGRAMS. Among the newer programs of the National Park Service is a plan to identify and recognize significant engineering landmarks. The Service works closely with the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Library of Congress in establishing a graphic, documentary record of the Nation's distinctive engineering accomplishments.

Other related programs, not sponsored by the National Park Service, are: The Architectural Records Project, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., which is assembling basic data on documentation of American architectural history, and is compiling a master catalog of American architectural drawings. The Index of American Design in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., maintains an extensive survey, made during the 1930's of historic American interior designs and furnishings.

## RELATED PRESERVATION FOLDERS

The National Park Service publishes the following information folders similar to this one on its preservation programs: *National Park Service Archeological Program*, *The National Register of Historic Places*, *The National Historic Landmarks Program*, and *The Natural Landmarks Program*. These publications, along with this folder, are available in packet form (*National Park Service Preservation Programs*, 50 cents) from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

For further information about any of the programs mentioned in this folder, write to the Director, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
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