

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

11 Most Endangered Places in 2004

Since 1988, the 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list produced by the USA National Trust for Historic Preservation has been one of the most effective tools in the fight to save the irreplaceable architectural, cultural, and natural heritage of the United States. US/ICOMOS refers to this program as a useful tool for the USA to highlight the nation's heritage issues.

The 11 sites chosen each year are threatened by neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. Some are well-known, such as the Vieux Carré in New Orleans or Ellis Island in New York Harbor. Others, like the Kennecott Copper Mines in Alaska or the village of East Aurora, New York, are less famous but just as important, because they too represent preservation challenges facing thousands of communities. Each site raises awareness about the dangers to specific parts of America's heritage and about preservation generally.

The list has now brought national attention to more than 140 significant buildings, sites and landscapes. At times, that attention has galvanized public support to rescue a treasured landmark, while in others it has been an opening salvo in a long battle to save an important piece of our history. 11 Most has been so successful at educating the public that now more than 20 states and numerous cities and towns publish their own lists of endangered places.

The following list for 2004 shows the range of endangered places in the USA, as well as possible solutions:

Nine Mile Canyon, Carbon and Duchesne Counties, Utah

Located in a remote part of Utah, Nine Mile Canyon is often called "the world's longest art gallery" as it contains more than 10,000 images carved onto canyon walls by Native Americans. The canyon also contains many historic sites – including stagecoach stations, settlers' cabins, ranches, and iron telegraph poles installed by the famed 19th-century Buffalo Soldiers – that stand as reminders of the area's pioneer history. Now this historic canyon is under increasing pressure from tourism, recreation, and energy development that threaten its significant prehistoric and historic resources.

Nine Mile Canyon, Rock Art



History

The Native American cultures that inhabited Nine Mile Canyon starting over 1700 years ago left a legacy of rock shelters, granaries and rock art throughout the canyon area. Held in a patchwork of federal, state, county and private ownership, the canyon is said to contain the highest concentration of monochromatic prehistoric rock art in North America. These petroglyphs and pictographs are attributed to the Archaic, Fremont and Ute people. Nine Mile Canyon is also an area with many diverse historic sites from the days of pioneer settlement, such as stagecoach stops, ranch buildings and settler's cabins.

Threat

This renowned area is now threatened by increased tourism, recreation and demands for domestic energy production. Although previously developed for oil and gas, the area is under increasing pressure by burgeoning demands for energy which could transform the historic landscape into an industrial zone with heavy industrial trucks rumbling through the narrow canyons in close proximity to fragile Native American rock art. Currently proposed projects for energy development and exploration would result in tens of thousands of trips by these trucks, in addition to numerous wells being drilled. Without a thorough inventory of the cultural resource sites at risk and adequate measures for protection, these activities could result in the destruction of irreplaceable cultural sites. This stretch of desert landscape, much larger than its name implies, is patrolled by a single ranger who seeks to protect the petroglyphs from well-meaning, but often destructive, tourists and recreational enthusiasts. A sustainable balance between increased tourism, energy development and cultural-resource protection must be found or these irreplaceable cultural and historic resources will be lost forever.

Solution

Nine Mile Canyon's best hope for remaining a world and national treasure rests on raising public awareness, planning and increased program funding. Nearly ten years ago BLM developed a plan for management and interpretation of the canyon, but it has never been implemented. Implementation of this plan, cooperative efforts between federal, state, local and private landowners, additional funding for cultural resource protection and tourism services are all steps needed to preserve its significant and irreplaceable treasures. BLM needs to ensure that energy exploration and development, as well as recreational management, complies strictly with federal laws that protect cultural resources from the harmful consequences associated with those activities.

Ridgewood Ranch, Home of Seabiscuit, Willits, California

Far away, in the oak and redwood-studded ranchlands of northern California, Ridgewood Ranch, Home of Seabiscuit, is in jeopardy, its former thoroughbred glory dulled by deterioration.

Nestled in the oak and redwood-studded ranchlands and mountains of Northern California is the home of a great American legend, Seabiscuit. It was here in 1939 at Ridgewood Ranch that an improbable winning trio – owner Charles Howard, jockey Red Pollard and trainer Tom Smith – nursed the ailing racehorse back to health after a serious injury. Seabiscuit's recuperation set the stage for an electrifying blaze-of-glory career finish at Santa Anita Racetrack that captured Depression-era America's imagination. Recently, a new generation has been introduced to the Seabiscuit tale through Laura Hillenbrand's book *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* and an Academy Award-nominated movie. Now, Seabiscuit's home and final resting place is in jeopardy, its former thoroughbred glory dulled by deterioration due to inadequate funding for maintenance.

History

Seabiscuit's owner, Charles Howard, a self-made millionaire auto dealer, purchased 16,000 acres in rural Mendocino County in 1919 as a cattle ranch and country home. Howard transformed the ranch into a thoroughbred facility unparalleled in California, building two large mare barns, a breeding barn, feed barns, paddocks, a half-track, and many other structures. It was here that Seabiscuit recuperated from injury in 1939, and enjoyed his retirement after his renowned victory at Santa Anita in a custom-built stud barn within view of the family home. From 1940 until being laid to rest on the ranch in 1947, Seabiscuit became a major tourist attraction, with thousands of visitors passing under the gate proudly proclaiming "Ridgewood Ranch, Home of Seabiscuit."

Threat

Still a working ranch, the property is owned by the Golden Rule Church Association, which has endeavored to be a model steward of the ranch. The church has kept developers at bay, but lacks the resources to protect the structures and landscape that comprise Seabiscuit's legacy. Many of the property's sites have been inadequately maintained over a period of several decades. Without urgent attention and funds for stabilization, restoration and maintenance of the historic ranch, Seabiscuit's home won't survive.

The Golden Rule Church Association has been actively working with the Mendocino Land Trust and the newly-formed Seabiscuit Heritage Foundation to develop strategies for the long-term protection of Ridgewood Ranch. A conservation easement is being developed that would protect 4,600 acres (7 square miles) of the ranch. The California Department of Conservation has already committed up to \$1,000,000 to purchase a farmland easement on the property, and the Church has agreed to donate a substantial portion of the easement value and to provide public access.

Solution

Additionally, historic preservation planning for the historic ranch core is underway. Solutions being discussed are: development of preservation easements to protect the ranch's significant historic sites in perpetuity; assistance with long-range planning, including conditions assessments and studies of the cultural heritage resources on the property; and community education programs, including workshops and publications with special attention to tourism and marketing. Although all of these solutions are viable, funding is in short supply.



Columbus Circle, New York

2 Columbus Circle, New York, N. Y.

In New York City, an unorthodox and controversial icon of the recent past, 2 Columbus Circle, located on the south-west corner of Central Park, may soon be stripped of its architectural integrity.

Created by architect Edward Durell Stone, who also designed Washington's famed Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Columbus Circle is a nationally recognized – albeit controversial – icon of the Modern Movement. Sporting a marble skin, porthole windows and a street-level arcade that critics have likened to a row of lollipops, the unorthodox building is radically different from the glass-and-steel boxes typical of its era.

Now it is slated to be sold and renovated as a permanent home for the Museum of Arts and Design. That's the good news; the bad news is that the design proposed for the new use would strip 2 Columbus Circle of its architectural integrity, and since it is not protected by New York's preservation ordinance, these changes could be made without any kind of preservation review. This means that unless the new owner can be persuaded of the building's significance, sweeping architectural changes could rob 2 Columbus Circle of its distinctive character and rob America of an engagingly quirky icon of the recent past.

History

Located at the southwest corner of Central Park, 2 Columbus Circle has been controversial ever since its completion in 1964. Originally designed to showcase the modern-art collection of supermarket heir Huntington Hartford, the building housed New York City

offices during the 1980s and 1990s but is now vacant, pending transfer to the private Museum of Arts and Design. The building was listed on the Preservation League of New York State's "Seven to Save" this year in recognition of its architectural and historical significance to the citizens of New York.

Threat

The new design for the building by Brad Cloepfil, although not finalized, includes extensive alterations that would destroy major elements of Edward Durell Stone's design. The destruction of 2 Columbus Circle's original façade would mean the loss of a unique chapter of America's story.

Solution

The National Trust urges the owners of 2 Columbus Circle, currently the City of New York, but soon to be the Museum of Arts and Design, to develop a restoration plan for the building that respects its integrity as a modernist masterpiece and celebrates its unique form and design. Listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places and public hearings by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission for landmark designation of 2 Columbus Circle will give the building added protection and ensure that all possible measures are taken to protect this important resource.

State of Vermont

With historic villages and downtowns, working farms, winding back roads, forest-wrapped lakes, spectacular mountain vistas and a strong sense of community, Vermont has a special magic that led National Geographic Traveler magazine to name the state one of „the World's Greatest Destinations.“ Yet in recent years, this small slice of America has come under tremendous pressure from the onslaught of big-box retail development. The seriousness of this threat led the National Trust to name the state to its list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 1993. Back then, Vermont was the only state without a Wal-Mart. Today it has four – and it now faces an invasion of behemoth stores that could destroy much of what makes Vermont Vermont.

To highlight the threat to this vital piece of America's heritage, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the state of Vermont to its 2004 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

During the 1990s Wal-Mart located three of its four Vermont stores in existing buildings and kept them relatively modest in size. Now, however, the world's largest company is planning to saturate the state – which has only 600,000 residents – with seven new mammoth mega-stores, each with a minimum of 150,000 square feet. These potential new stores may be located in St. Albans, Morrisville, Newport/Derby, St. Johnsbury, Bennington, Rutland, and Middlebury. Wal-Mart's plans are sure to attract an influx of other big-box retailers. The likely result: degradation of the Green Mountain State's unique sense of place, economic disinvestment in historic downtowns, loss of locally-owned businesses, and an erosion of the sense of community that seems an inevitable by-product of big-box sprawl. With deep regret, the National Trust takes the rare step of re-listing Vermont as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

History

Big-box development typically occurs on the outskirts of town, consuming farmland and open space, fueling sprawl and other problems associated with insensitive expansion. Communities often welcome these large stores in the hope that they will bring economic benefits. Too often, however, the stores bring hidden costs and cause significant economic and social harm.

Threat

The distinctive characteristics that define Vermont – historic towns, villages and rural landscapes – could be lost if sprawl-type development is allowed to occur in a haphazard, out-of-scale, land-consuming manner. The one-size-fits-all big-box "template" has proven to be detrimental to communities across the United States because of its negative economic and environmental impact on historic downtowns and local businesses. The size and design of these stores often overwhelm their surroundings, and impersonal corporate identity too often trumps community character.

Solution

The arrival of big-box sprawl often fostered by retailers such as Wal-Mart has been resisted by increasing numbers of communities that are determined to prevent or minimize the loss of their open space and the erosion of the economic vitality of their traditional business districts. People want and should have easy access to basic goods at low prices – but they also have the right to determine how their communities should grow and what they want to preserve and protect. At the very least, communities should accept big-box development with their eyes open and understand its long-term costs. Some big-box stores have adapted to local standards and worked to fit in gracefully with existing commercial districts. Some have even located in recycled vacant properties in existing downtowns. Vermonters should learn from what has happened elsewhere and persuade Wal-Mart and other large retailers to adapt the way they do business so as to enhance existing communities. Wal-Mart should change to accommodate Vermont, not the other way around.

Tobacco Farms, Southern Maryland

For almost 400 years, wood-frame tobacco barns have dotted the rolling fields of Southern Maryland, their shapes defining the character of the area's rural landscapes and their simple construction echoing traditional timber-framing methods used in England for centuries. Once essential to the process of air-curing tobacco, a mainstay crop of Maryland's agriculture since the 17th century, historic tobacco barns are now being lost at an alarming rate as the region's agricultural land is consumed by the spread of the D.C. metropolitan commuter-shed. Pressure from residential sprawl has only been aggravated by the unintended consequences of Maryland's 2001 „tobacco buy-out“ state policy, which encouraged farmers to stop cultivating tobacco. Scores of tobacco barns now have no productive purpose, and stand unused and deteriorating.

History

For many generations, these tobacco barns have been central to the economy of Maryland and a defining architectural characteristic of the region's rural landscape. First built by English settlers in the 17th century, these air-cure tobacco barns are unique to Maryland and provide a glimpse into four hundred years of the area's complex agricultural and economic history.

Threat

Southern Maryland is rapidly changing, and residential subdivisions and shopping centers replace tobacco fields. In 2001, a state-sponsored program to discourage tobacco cultivation offered farmers a substantial payment if they stopped growing tobacco. Almost all of Maryland's approximately 1,000 tobacco farmers accepted the buy-out and no longer cultivate what was once Maryland's primary „money crop.“ The buy-out made hundreds of tobacco barns instantly obsolete. Unless viable alternative uses can be found, these modest landmarks will fall to development pressure, deferred maintenance, and weather.

Solution

Congress created the Historic Barn Preservation Program in 2002 to identify and promote practical solutions for the continued agricultural use of older and historic barns but has yet to appropriate funding for this program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program. Additionally, supporting the hard work of farmers in their on-going effort to develop and implement productive new agricultural uses for the barns, as an alternative to tobacco cultivation. Preservationists can help by contributing to a special fund established by Preservation Maryland, the National Trust's statewide nonprofit partner, to promote continued agricultural use. The National Trust's BARN AGAIN! Program encourages preservation and provides technical and financial assistance for adapting historic barns for agricultural uses. This program may also help save these important buildings.



Tobacco barn, Southern Maryland



Bethlehem Steel Plants, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Bethlehem Steel Plants, historic view



Bethlehem Steel Plants, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

One of the nation's most important steel plants, the Bethlehem Works in Pennsylvania played a pioneering role in the development of America's steel and defense industries. Steel from the Bethlehem Works was used to build the Empire State Building, the Golden Gate Bridge and the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels, and to reconstruct the White House in the Truman era. Today, the sprawling mill lies dormant, in danger of being cleared for a retail complex or industrial park. Unless preservationists succeed in saving the birthplace of integrated steel-making, there might not be a single blast furnace, machine shop, foundry or crucible building left on the site of one of America's – and the world's – greatest industrial triumphs.

History

As the birthplace of the modern American defense industry, the plant manufactured the first modern battle fleet for the U.S. Navy in 1885 and remained the nation's largest shipbuilder and military supplier for generations. Some of steel-making's most significant technological innovations – including the fully integrated Bessemer process, heavy steel forging, and the production of continuously wide flange structural beams and columns – were developed or perfected here. The site is unique because it possesses the greatest number of buildings, structures and equipment remaining of any shut-down steelmaking facility in the country.

Threat

Now known as Bethlehem Works, the former plant, which closed in the mid-1990s, encompasses about 100 acres with more than 25 buildings and other structures dating from as early as 1863. Despite some basic infrastructure investment, virtually nothing has been done to protect the buildings, which have begun to experience deterioration and vandalism. Roofs are leaking and, in some cases, have blown off, and windows and doors have been broken and interior contents damaged. Because future ownership and development plans are in question, no significant steps are being taken to prevent further damage and deterioration. Despite vandalism and weather, the greatest threat lies in the probability of demolition.

Solution

While it still owned the site, Bethlehem Steel Corporation developed a comprehensive master plan for the plant that would have retained key buildings and structures. This included investing approximately \$13 million into new infrastructure for half of the site with new roads, utilities and streetscape improvements. How-

ever, when Bethlehem Steel lost the property in 2003 due to bankruptcy, the site's future became uncertain. Currently there are several options for adaptive reuse, including a mixed-use plan anchored by a proposed National Museum of Industrial History, with other portions of the complex converted to new retail or industrial purposes. The site deserves an innovative redevelopment approach that retains the key aspects of the plant while integrating new, compatible infill construction.

Endangered List Program

These are just six of 11 sites the National Trust for Historic Preservation named this year for its 2004 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. The other five places can be read about online at www.nationaltrust.org/11most/2004/index.html. The State of Vermont, which was also listed in 1993, makes a rare and regrettable reappearance.

As Richard Moe, president of the National Trust, points out the List includes places:

From factories that defined a nation to the home of a racehorse that inspired generations, from rural archaeological sites to big-city high rises, from individual landmarks to entire neighborhoods, historic places tell us who we are as a nation. They constitute an epic cultural narrative whose chapters include not only world-famous icons but hidden treasures. Unless all of us become aware of the importance of our heritage and take action to preserve it, America's past won't have a future. That's the real message of the 11 Most Endangered list.

In 2003, The History Channel broadcast the 'Save Our History' program, focussing on two sites that were on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places and are now being restored. From May 2004, The History Channel will also run a series of public service announcements that highlight the 2004 list.

US/ICOMOS

Reference

This report is almost verbatim from the National Trust for Historic Preservation website www.nationaltrust.org/11most/