

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Endangered Historic Places

The “11 Most Endangered Historic Places” are compiled annually by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and are meant to illustrate the plight of many other sites throughout the United States. The National Trust is a major partner organization of US/ICOMOS. Here are the sites from the year 2015.

East Point Historic Civic Block in East Point, Georgia

East Point City Hall, City Auditorium, City Library and Victory Park form a contiguous block that has been the heart of downtown East Point since the 1930s. The East Point Historic Civic Block is situated in an area of East Point that is seeing renewed calls for private development. With no plans for protection and the constant threat of demolition by neglect, the future for these historic buildings remains uncertain.

According to Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Civic Block, located at the heart of the predominantly African American community of East Point, is a rare cohesive example of civic architecture from the 1930s. The block, which has borne witness to decades of the community’s history, is suffering from neglect. Along with its partners at the East Point Preservation Alliance and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Trust encourages the City of East Point to consider alternatives to demolishing these iconic community landmarks.

The block’s historic buildings represent architectural styles that were popular in the South during the Depression era, forming a rarely seen cohesive block of civic architecture that tells the story

of not only this one Georgia community, but also of towns across the state built in that same era. Until a few years ago, most of these buildings were a functional part of the city government and played important roles in the community. They are now vandalized, burglarized and left to deteriorate.

Carrollton Courthouse

The Carrollton Courthouse served as the seat of government for Jefferson Parish until the City of Carrollton was annexed by New Orleans in 1874. Now, this stately Greek Revival building, designed by one of New Orleans’ most noteworthy architects, Henry Howard, is threatened with an uncertain future as the Orleans Parish School Board prepares to sell it with no preservation safeguards in place.

NT President Stephanie Meeks states that the Carrollton Courthouse is a beloved landmark with a rich tradition of serving the community and therefore deserves to have a special place in New Orleans’ future. The National Trust urges the Orleans Parish School Board to join preservationists in planning the next phase for the Carrollton Courthouse to ensure its legacy continues.

The courthouse is an important public building from Carrollton’s days as an independent city and is one of the city’s most significant landmarks located outside of the French Quarter. In the early 1950s, the community and the non-profit group Louisiana Landmarks Society staved off a demolition threat that led to the courthouse’s rebirth as a school. From 1957 to 2013, it housed a series of public schools, including Benjamin Franklin High School, the first New Orleans public high school to integrate in 1963. Musicians Wynton and Delfeayo Marsalis and actor Wendell Pierce are among Ben Franklin’s famous graduates.



East Point City Hall (photo Erin Rodgers)



Carrollton Courthouse (photo Louisiana Landmarks)



Street corner in Little Havana (photo Steven Brooke Studios)

Little Havana in Miami

Little Havana has long been a safe haven for immigrants and a symbol of the American melting pot. A mixed use, walkable, series of neighborhoods, Little Havana was first a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in the early 20th century. Beginning in the 1960s, these neighborhoods became home to generations of Cuban immigrants, and to this day they remain a cultural center for Cuban Americans, as well as immigrants from the Caribbean, Central, and South America.

There are two main threats to the Little Havana neighborhood: upzoning, which could dramatically alter the character of the area; and the lack of protections in place for scattered historic building types. Owing to the neighborhood's ideal location—close to Downtown Miami and the Brickell Financial District—upzoning represents the most critical threat to the historic scale and character of Little Havana.

National Trust president Stephanie Meeks says as the most well known Cuban-American enclave in the United States and as symbol of the immigrant experience and the American melting pot, Little Havana remains a thriving, diverse urban area. Across the country, cities are looking for creative ways to ensure that new development is compatible with existing neighborhoods. The National Trust urges Miami to explore zoning policies that respect the historic character of this beloved urban area.

Little Havana's neighborhoods are still composed of residential blocks intersected by commercial streets, creating a self-sustaining community where goods and services are located within walking distance of area residents – many of whom are immigrant families, seniors, and middle-to-low-income workers. Little Havana contains unique local variations of iconic American architecture, such as the bungalow, the walk-up apartment, and the courtyard apartment. Ideally, these scattered historic building types would be listed together as a protected collection of buildings.

South Street Seaport in New York

The South Street Seaport features some of the oldest architecture in New York City. The Seaport's restored 19th-century commercial buildings transport visitors back in time, evoking the commercial trade of that era. Located along the East River, adjacent to the Financial District, the Seaport is unique for its continuous relationship to the waterfront and its status as the focal point of the early maritime industry in New York City.

While an 11-block area within the Seaport is part of a locally designated historic district, and a larger portion of the Seaport is separately listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is currently under threat due to a series of development proposals that would disrupt the look, feel and low-scale historic character of the Seaport. The Howard Hughes Corporation has proposed building a high-rise tower that would be located on a pier over the water at the foot of Beekman Street. The New Market building, a 1939 structure located within the National Register boundaries but outside the locally designated district, would be demolished to make way for the tower. There are also concerns about the potential demolition due to neglect of all or parts of the nearby locally designated historic Tin Building. Taken together, the tower and other development proposals threaten to dramatically alter a historic neighborhood that has endured for generations.

According to the National Trust's president the proposed developments will have an overwhelming impact on the historic neighborhood, diminishing the Seaport's unique relationship to the water and compromising one of the most intact 19th century neighborhoods in Manhattan. The issues around the redevelopment of the South Street Seaport are urgent as the approval process for partial demolition of the Tin and New Market Buildings is in motion and the developer has started the process of seeking City approval for the new tower.



South Street Seaport in New York, Schermerhome Row (photo Jim Henderson, Wikipedia)

The Factory in West Hollywood

The building now known as The Factory is a Truscon Steel Company-designed industrial building built in 1929 to accommodate the booming success of the Mitchell Camera Corporation. Mitchell Cameras revolutionized filmmaking and fuelled the growth of the film industry in Hollywood and around the world. By minimizing noise and maximizing functionality, these cameras enabled films to go from silent to "talkies" and continued to influence camera technology until the digital era arrived in the early 2000s. Today, The Factory is one of the last remaining industrial buildings in West Hollywood built specifically for the technical aspects of the film industry.

Following the camera company's move to the suburbs in 1946, The Factory was converted to serve a series of new uses, including a cosmetics warehouse, a furniture showroom, a pri-



The Factory in West Hollywood
(photo Hunter Kerhart)

vate celebrity nightclub, an antique market and an experimental theatre. It is most famously known as the home of Studio One, a pioneering gay disco that opened in 1974. Hosting the likes of Patti LaBelle, Joan Rivers and Liza Minnelli, Studio One and its Backlot Theatre were open seven days a week, had cutting edge sound and light systems, and a dance floor that regularly drew more than 1,000 people a night. Founded by a Beverly Hills optometrist and openly gay man, Studio One became a place for gay men to socialize and proudly and openly celebrate their identity. As such, it was associated with the gay rights movement throughout its history. When the AIDS epidemic hit in the early 1980s, for example, one of the nation's first major fundraisers for AIDS research took place at Studio One.

Now The Factory's legacy is threatened with demolition by a large-scale hotel project—one of the many new developments now jeopardizing West Hollywood and Hollywood's LGBTQ heritage and early film industry history. The Robertson Lane Hotel project calls for a pedestrian "paseo" or walkway to run directly through a portion of the site on which The Factory now sits, a route that could easily be realigned to spare this landmark from the wrecking ball.

A. G. Gaston Motel in Birmingham, AL

According to Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the A.G. Gaston Motel as a gathering place for prominent leaders in the Civil Rights movement stood at the center of one of the most significant events in the United States' history. She hopes that adding the Gaston Motel to the list of 11 Most Endangered Historic Places will help raise awareness about this important place and focuses attention on the urgent need to restore it. A proper reuse of the Gaston will allow it to become a living library that teaches future generations about the powerful events that occurred there.

The two-story motel was built in 1954 by Arthur George (A.G.) Gaston, a pioneering African-American entrepreneur and philanthropist who was also instrumental in the integration of Birmingham. The Gaston Motel, which sits adjacent to the 16th Street Baptist Church, was a gathering place for African-Amer-



A.G. Gaston Motel in Birmingham, AL,
(photo City of Birmingham Archives)

ican leaders of the Civil Rights Movement including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth.

In 1963, Dr. King stayed in room 30 which was used as "war room" by the movement's top leaders. There, Dr. King made the decision to defy a court injunction and submit himself to be jailed as an act of solidarity with local protestors. Mr. Gaston then paid \$160,000 to bail Dr. King out of jail.

For the past twenty years, the property has suffered from vacancy and disrepair. The City, which owns the motel, intends to create a tourism destination that includes reuse of the motel and new construction that would house the Freedom Center and Public Policy Institute.

Chautauqua Amphitheater in Chautauqua, NY

Chautauqua Amphitheater is a National Historic Landmark located 70 miles southwest of Buffalo, N.Y. Known colloquially as the Amp, the Amphitheater, which has hosted a wide range of



Chautauqua Amphitheater during a performance (photo Dick Jensen)

leaders, activists and artists over its 122-year history, is threatened by the Chautauqua Institution's plan to demolish the Amp for a new building.

According to the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation the story of the Amp is the story of America's political, cultural and spiritual identity. For well over a hundred years, it has occupied a special place in American culture.

A coalition of preservation groups, including the National Trust, is now calling on the Chautauqua Institution's distinguished Board of Trustees to reconsider the need to replace this unique and beloved structure. The Amp is an authentic and important part of the Institution's history of intellectual engagement, entertainment and debate. Chautauqua transformed American life as the first multi-use retreat in the U.S. that is an arts colony, music festival, village square and summer encampment all at once, spawning dozens of "daughter" Chautauquas throughout the U.S. Chautauqua programs have explored important religious, social and political issues of the day; engaged individuals and families in response to these issues; and fostered excellence in the appreciation, performance and teaching of the arts.

In January 2015, the National Trust added the Amp to its revolving portfolio of National Treasures – a collection of threatened historic buildings, neighborhoods, communities, and landscapes across the country where the National Trust is committed to finding a long-term preservation solution.

Old U.S. Mint in San Francisco

Built in 1874, the Old U.S. Mint in San Francisco is a National Historic Landmark and one of the very few downtown buildings to survive the 1906 earthquake and fire that devastated the city center. The city's sole financial institution still standing in the wake of the disaster, the Old U.S. Mint not only safeguarded \$200 million in gold reserves that backed the U.S. dollar, but also served as the city's depository for all emergency financial transactions as the city embarked on a monumental recovery effort.

The "Granite Lady" remains a commanding presence just south of Market Street, an area that is being transformed by an unprecedented tech-fueled construction boom, with historic buildings

being rehabilitated and dozens of new mid- and high-rise commercial and buildings already built, under construction, or in the planning stages.

A restored and reactivated Old U.S. Mint should be part of the legacy of the current economic boom. Instead, as glistening new construction rises all around, the Old U.S. Mint stands shuttered, deteriorating, and at risk of being forgotten. Despite the building's prominence and history, this is the Old Mint's second stint on the National Trust's America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list because its future is still uncertain. First named to the list in 1994, this iconic building stands forlorn and forgotten in the heart of the city, increasingly at risk as decades of neglect and inattention to both its structural needs and cultural importance take their toll.

Currently, the public has no access to the Old U.S. Mint, which is owned by the City. There is strong public desire to restore the Old U.S. Mint as a cultural focal point with increased public interaction in and around the space.

Oak Flat in Superior, Arizona

Protected in the past by Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, the Oak Flat contains many cultural resources including archaeological sites, historical sites, and artifacts, as well as many areas eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Oak Flat is a sacred site to the San Carlos Apache and several other Native American tribes.

It is currently threatened by copper mining. A land exchange included in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 would open the site up to mining. The National Trust and partners including the San Carlos Apache encourage members of Congress to reconsider this land exchange as any mining activity at Oak Flat would severely threaten this sacred place.

The National Trust hopes this designation will increase national awareness of Oak Flat and its profound importance to Native American tribes. It claims the tribes who regard Oak Flat as a sacred place were not adequately consulted before this land exchange took place. Before any potentially harmful mining activity takes place at Oak Flat, it needs to be made sure that the tribes and others who care about this important place have a voice in shaping its future.



Old US Mint, San Francisco (photo Hugh R. Rowland)



Oak Flat in Superior, Arizona (photo Kevin Cassadore)

Grand Canyon in Arizona

One of the world's most celebrated natural wonders, the Grand Canyon is also a place of immense sacred significance for many American Indian tribes, some of which consider the Canyon their original homeland and place of origin. Even though the Grand Canyon is protected as both a National Park and a World Heritage Site, its cultural heritage faces multiple threats:

- Renewed uranium mining around the canyon is threatening drinking water and encroaching on historic properties, including the National Register-listed Red Butte Traditional Cultural Property, which is of critical religious and cultural importance to the Havasupai and Zuni tribes;
- A proposed commercial and residential development at the South Rim entrance to the National Park at Tusayan could increase the local population tenfold, straining the park's visitor capacity and threatening the aquifer that is the sole source of water for Havasu Falls, the cultural foundation of the Havasupai tribe;
- The proposed Escalade tourist development on the Navajo Reservation includes an aerial tramway that would disturb the character of the site by shuttling 10,000 visitors a day to the



Grand Canyon, Havasu Creek (photo Alan English)



Fort Worth Stockyards (photo Kathryn A. Stephens)

confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers, an area of great sacred significance to the Hopi, Navajo, and other American Indian tribes.

The administration in Washington should exercise its existing authorities and responsibilities under federal law and international treaty to preserve the Grand Canyon as the international icon and sacred place it is, and assure that its cultural resources are stewarded and cultural values are vigorously protected from insensitive development.

Fort Worth Stockyards in Fort Worth, Texas

The Fort Worth Stockyards historic district is one of the most distinctive historic sites in Texas, representative of the economic and cultural westward expansion in America and the emergence of the cattle and livestock industry. As the first industry in Fort Worth, the stockyards, and later the adjacent meat packing plants, transformed Fort Worth from a small frontier community into a major urban economic center. Today, the area attracts more than three million visitors annually, and its historic architecture, street-scapes and cultural identity contribute to local heritage tourism, an economic driver for Fort Worth.

The stockyards are threatened by plans to implement a nearly 1 million square foot, \$175 million redevelopment project in the Fort Worth Stockyards Historic District. In spite of its designation as a National Register Historic District, less than 10 percent of the buildings in Fort Worth's Stockyards are protected from demolition through local designation. The establishment of a local historic district would be the most effective solution to the threat of insensitive development.

Commissioning a historic resources survey of the stockyards will help Historic Fort Worth and local preservationists navigate the preservation issues and will aid communication with the City of Fort Worth and its chosen development partner, Majestic of California. The survey outcomes would greatly assist local property owners in pursuing designations and taking advantage of local, state, and federal preservation financial incentives.