

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in the United States

The 11 Most Endangered Sites is compiled annually by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and is meant to illustrate the plight of many other sites throughout the United States. The National Trust is a major partner organization of US/ICOMOS.

1. Arts & Industries Building of Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

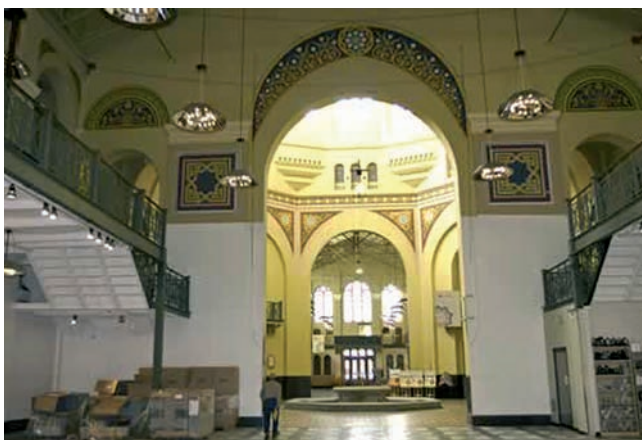
In 2004, this monument to history and culture was closed, and it has yet to reopen. Its distinctive architecture and prominent location on the Mall attract curious visitors, who are disappointed to find the doors firmly locked, with no hint as to when—or whether—they will open again.

“The Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building represents a serious challenge for the Smithsonian and an exceptional opportunity for preservationists”, said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “What was once the crown



Arts & Industries Building of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington

Interior of the Arts & Industries Building of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington



jewel of the Smithsonian Institution has become an empty relic. It's time to find a productive use for this landmark—perhaps even an appropriate private use that incorporates public access—and return it to the spotlight it so richly deserves.”

2. Blair Mountain Battlefield, Logan County, West Virginia

The 1,600-acre Spruce Fork Ridge of Blair Mountain, about 90 minutes southwest of Charleston, West Virginia, was the scene of the 1921 showdown between a miners' army at least 7,500 strong and a 3,000-man defensive force headed by the Logan County Sheriff, Don Chafin, and other law officers, many of whom were on the coal companies' payrolls. The defensive force, bolstered by private planes that dropped homemade bombs on the miners, dug trenches, blocked roads, felled trees and mounted machine guns along the 15-mile ridgeline. The miners used natural pathways to mount the ridge and breach Chafin's line. The confrontation was the largest armed labor conflict in the nation's history, with miners seeking the right not only to unionize but also to exercise civil liberties such as freedom of speech and assembly.

Past preservation efforts have failed because of fierce opposition from the coal companies that own or lease most of the ridge. Hobet Mining, Arch Coal, Massey Energy Company and Aracoma Coal Company, among others, are intent on strip-mining, which would destroy the battlefield. Permits for strip-mining are issued through the Army Corps of Engineers, which is subject to a federal preservation review process that provides for consideration of—but not necessarily protection of—historic sites.

By increasing public awareness of the significance of the Blair Mountain battlefield, preservation advocates hope to win support for permanently protecting the site with easements and developing an economically sustainable interpretive program, possibly through the National Coal Heritage Area, which would allow the region to take advantage of West Virginia's fastest-growing industry—tourism. An independent evaluation of alternate mining methods may illuminate means by which the site could be mined and preserved. The best possible solution would be a compromise between the property owners and preservationists that will save the site for interpretation, while bringing economic benefit to the owners and local residents.

3. Doo Wop Motels, Wildwood, New Jersey

Families have been vacationing at the Jersey Shore for more than 100 years, and the Wildwood Doo Wop motels have been a major beach destination since they were constructed from 1956 to 1970. The Doo Wop district offered families an affordable vacation that seemed exotic because of the motels' far-out design and faraway-sounding names such as Tahiti, Caribbean and Starlux. Named for a popular singing style of the day, Doo Wop motels sport neon-bright colors,



Example of a Doo Wop motel in New Jersey

funky signage and exotic architecture decked out with sawtooth angles, crazy overhangs, space-age “Jetson” ramps and lava rock siding. Considered the largest collection of mid-20th century commercial resort architecture in the nation, the motels celebrate a number of kitschy styles, including the Polynesian-inspired “Pu Pu Platter”, the “Chinatown Revival” with its *de rigueur* pagoda roof, and “Phony Colonee”, a tribute to American patriotism. Besides boasting a well-loved boardwalk, the Wildwood area became known as a rock-and-roll hot spot where Bill Haley and the Comets performed “Rock Around the Clock” in public for the first time in 1954 and Dick Clark broadcast his “American Bandstand” program live in 1957.

Doo Wop motel, illuminated advertising



The demand for resorts that offer modern amenities means that motels in the Doo Wop district, which encompasses the cities of Wildwood, Wildwood Crest and North Wildwood, are ripe for development. Nearly 100 Doo Wop motels have been demolished in recent years, usually for the construction of market-rate condominiums. While the architectural and historic significance of the motels has been widely recognized, local governments have not reached agreement on how—or whether—to regulate new development.

The Doo Wop Preservation League is lobbying local elected officials for zoning restrictions and incentives to support property owners who want to keep and renovate their Doo Wop motels. The Art Deco District in Miami Beach is one example of a success story, as is nearby Cape May, which saved its late-19th century architecture from the wrecking ball. The Caribbean Motel, widely regarded as the Wildwoods’ quintessential Doo Wop motel because of its super-sized neon sign and multi-colored “space ship” lights, has been purchased by new owners who are making a significant investment to preserve and refurbish the property. Many of the motel’s unique but aging architectural features are being fully rehabilitated, while the interiors are being professionally redesigned with stylish Doo Wop-inspired furnishings.

4. Fort Snelling Upper Post, Hennepin County, Minnesota

Fort Snelling was established in 1820 to protect fur traders and early settlers. Beginning in the late 1800s, dozens of new buildings were constructed on the Upper Bluff area for training, supplies and administration. Today, Fort Snelling is a National Historic Landmark, and the Fort Snelling Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Twenty-eight buildings in the Upper Post area are considered historically significant or important to the future use of the site.

The military gradually abandoned all of the buildings in the Upper Post area after World War II, disposing of parts of the site to various federal and state agencies, and now there is no clear authority responsible for overall infrastructure. While several of the buildings were shuttered at the time they were vacated, many have suffered from deferred maintenance and vandalism over the years. Buildings are deteriorating at an increasingly rapid rate as a result of broken windows, damaged gutters and downspouts, and deteriorated roofs—some of which are on the verge of collapse. The 28 historic buildings that make up Fort Snelling’s Upper Post complex occupy a unique and important place in Minnesota history. But this year may be a critical period for the complex if they are to be preserved and reused.

The Upper Post area contains a collection of significant historic, architectural and cultural resources ideally suited for preservation and sensitive redevelopment. Recently the federal government has taken steps to widen the range of acceptable uses for the buildings in the Upper Post. If this occurs, it will create the opportunity for a public agency to assume responsibility for coordinating the development of the Upper Post by seeking proposals from private parties for rehabilitation and reuse of the buildings. The challenge will be to identify appropriate and feasible new uses that will respect the character of the buildings and their landscape. Many local residents hope that the complex can be transformed into a mixed-use development like Fort Worden near Port Townsend, Washington, or Fort Sheridan near Chicago. If an appropriate public agency like Hennepin County, which is considering the possibilities there, can gain control of the site for redevelopment, the Upper Post could have a bright future.

5. Historic Communities and Landmarks of the Mississippi Coast



House on the Mississippi Coast, damaged by Hurricane Katrina



Destroyed house in Biloxi



Last house on Pearl Street, Biloxi

Badly damaged house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright



Pascagoula, damaged tenement from the 1880s



When Hurricane Katrina's 145-mile per hour winds and 30-foot storm surge hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005 the damage to Mississippi's historic communities was enormous. Unique and charming cities and towns such as Gulfport, Pass Christian and Ocean Springs suffered unfathomable damage which their residents are still working to repair. Between 250 and 300 historic structures on the coast were wiped out completely and more than 1,200 were damaged. Historic Landmarks with significant damage from the

hurricane include Beauvoir, where Confederate President Jefferson Davis wrote his memoirs and spent his final years in Biloxi; Pascagoula's LaPointe-Krebs House, the "Old Spanish Fort"; and the 1874 Bay Saint Louis's Hancock County Courthouse. The stories are heartbreaking and numerous.

The historic communities of the Mississippi Gulf Coast are threatened with land speculation and new development that ignores the remaining historic character of these towns. In addition, lack of

preservation and specific funding hinders individual homeowners from tackling the difficult job of stabilizing and rehabilitating their property. Many of the landmark structures of the Gulf Coast that are open to the public are further threatened by the loss of revenue, jeopardizing their restoration and future viability as community landmarks.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has recommended \$80 million in preservation grants for Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. This funding is critical to meeting the preservation needs on the Gulf Coast. Local zoning restrictions, height limitations and preservation laws need to be enforced and defended from development interests seeking more intensive redevelopment opportunities.

6. Historic Neighborhoods of New Orleans, Louisiana

Containing more than 30,000 structures and comprising more than half of the core area of the fabled Crescent City, the 20 historic neighborhoods of New Orleans are an irreplaceable national treasure. They tell a uniquely fascinating story infused with jazz rhythms, unique architectural grace-notes, and Creole undertones. But now the story could be erased: The unprecedented destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina and a failed levee system threatens to eradicate the character that made these neighborhoods so special.

While the world-famous Vieux Carre, the Garden District and some other districts escaped severe damage from winds and water, other neighborhoods such as Holy Cross, Treme, New Marigny and Broadmoor—all of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places—remain rubble-strewn and largely unoccupied months after the storm. These neighborhoods, relatively little-known to tourists, are the heart and soul of New Orleans. It is these neighborhoods that housed one of the largest populations of free people of color before the Civil War, provided a new home for immigrants, gave birth to jazz—one of America's greatest gifts to the world—and provided the distinctive architectural setting for the development of the special culture that has always set New Orleans apart from other American cities. These 19th and early 20th-century neighborhoods have been integral to the shaping of New Orleans, and their recovery is essential for the city's future. They provide the homes of the modest income working class on whom this city depends.

Boarded-up house in New Orleans



The challenge of recovering from an unprecedented storm has overwhelmed both public and private efforts. While owners wrestle with the complexities and uncertainties of job losses, flood insurance payouts, levee reconstruction, restoration of public services and endless delays, historic buildings continue to deteriorate. Many have also been unnecessarily "red-tagged" for demolition.

Through volunteers, publicity, advocacy and funding the preservation community has provided assistance and information for owners of historic homes in New Orleans. Continued efforts to protect properties and provide targeted assistance to owners in the most severely affected historic neighborhoods are urgently needed. The National Trust is working with its local partners, particularly the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, to ensure that these threatened neighborhoods are restored as healthy, attractive, viable places for people to live.

7. Town of Kenilworth, Illinois

The idea of a model residential community was on the mind of Kenilworth founder Joseph Sears in 1889 when he made his first purchase of a 224-acre wooded site 15 miles north of Chicago. Kenilworth came into being in the rush of excitement and planning for Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where the "City Beautiful" concept was unveiled. Among the noted architects that Sears attracted to his project were Franklin P. Burnham, who was one of Kenilworth's first residents and a director of the Kenilworth Company, which was formed to raise capital for the development. Another key player was architect George W. Maher, one of the most prolific Prairie School architects, who designed more than 40 houses in the Village and was instrumental in continuing the quality and character of the original village as Kenilworth grew to its current boundaries by the end of the 1920s, and the building of homes was essentially complete by the 1940s. Most of the 830 homes in the community are more than 80 years old, with many over 100 years old.

Since the Village has no ordinances on the books to protect the historic homes, teardowns are occurring at an alarming rate in Kenilworth, with 47 houses already lost to demolition. Nearly half of all teardowns have occurred during the last three years, including several homes designed by the most prominent architects involved in the Village's design. Many of these lost architectural gems have been replaced with new houses that are significantly larger in size and not in sync with the style and character of the neighborhoods. Since the National Trust listed "Teardowns in Historic Neighborhoods" on the 2002 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, this trend continues to grow and expand across the nation. Kenilworth is one of the more than 300 communities in 33 states the National Trust has documented as struggling to retain their historic community character when threatened by teardowns.

Time is now the enemy since the Village did not anticipate the teardown threat and has no comprehensive plan to stop it. Designating Kenilworth as an endangered historical place is a much-needed first step toward building the community support needed to establish a local landmark ordinance and designation program, in addition to modernized zoning ordinances. To help mobilize Kenilworth and community leaders across the country, the National Trust has launched the initial phase of the Teardowns Resource Guide, an online source for strategies and tools commonly being used to manage teardowns.

8. Kootenai Lodge, Bigfork, Montana

One of the most significant historic places in Northwest Montana, the Kootenai Lodge consists of 20 buildings, including a Main Lodge, several smaller lodges, dining halls and various cabins. The buildings range in size from the humble quarters of the hired help to the magnificent lodge and living quarters for residents and guests. Almost all the structures are built of cedar and larch logs, hand-peeled to retain the colorful and delicate cambium layer as a decorative touch, and all nestle into the landscape as if they have been here forever. To compliment the remarkable log buildings, the landscape was designed with a variety of native and exotic trees and shrubs. Man-made elements, such as stone bridges, gravel walks, arbors and seating areas are scattered throughout the property. Designed to take advantage of the open vistas of the meadow and seclusion of the wooded areas, these spaces enhance the visual appeal and natural serenity of the lake and nearby mountains.

The Milhous Group, which purchased the 42-acre property in 2005, is planning to build 42 condominiums, 24 boat slips, a pool and a new road. The plan calls for the demolition of several structures and the alteration of all remaining historic buildings. The historic barn has already been dismantled and relocated, and many of the old-growth trees have been cut down. The density proposed by the current redevelopment plan will significantly diminish the historic and architectural character of the historic lodge, cabins and landscape, and the addition of 42 new structures will obliterate historically open spaces and vistas. Public outcry has been fierce, with hundreds of residents attending meetings and voicing their opposition to the plan. Due to the unwillingness of the developer to consider alternative plans and the inability of the planning commission to make adjustments due to the lack of zoning, the historic character of the property is in imminent danger of being destroyed.

Opponents of the planned development have encouraged the developer to scale back his plans into a smaller footprint and include more sensitive design and placement of new constructed buildings. If the developer were so inclined, the redevelopment at Kootenai Lodge could be done sensitively while still accommodating some growth, providing a model for redevelopment of a large, historic, recreational property.

9. Mission San Miguel Arcangel, San Miguel, California

Much more than a place of worship, the mission was a colonial institution of great importance in the spread of the Spanish Empire. Spain's colonial ambitions in North America ultimately proved unsustainable, and Alta California passed into the hands of an independent Mexico in 1821. The following decade, the Mexican government secularized Mission San Miguel and all the Franciscan California missions, leading to the mission's virtual abandonment. While the mission complex fell into a state of disrepair, new secular uses were found. During the 1850s, mission buildings housed a series of retail operations, one of which was the most popular saloon along el Camino Real. In 1859, the mission was returned to the Catholic Church by President Buchanan, but two more decades would pass before Reverend Philip Farrelly took up residence as First Pastor of Mission San Miguel and repair work commenced. In 1928, the mission was returned to the founding Franciscan padres, who began an extensive renovation and preservation effort which continues to the present day. Despite its tumultuous history, the San Miguel Mission complex, midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, enjoys unusual architectural integrity, and today offers a rare glimpse of Spanish Colonial mission life and the forces that shaped its history.

The mission was severely damaged by the San Simeon earthquake in 2003. In addition to significant structural damage, the earthquake caused extensive damage to priceless interior wall paintings. Estimates for total cost of all conservation efforts for the mission will be nearly \$14 million.

Directly following the 2003 earthquake, Mission San Miguel hired a team of architects, engineers and conservators to develop a preservation plan. The mission has already funded nearly \$1 million worth of construction to stabilize parts of the church and other buildings. While progress is being made slowly, it will require collaborative work to ensure that the Mission can receive desperately needed federal and state preservation and disaster funds as well as financial contributions from foundations and the general public to ensure the Mission's continued survival.

Kootenai Lodge, Bigfork, Montana



10. Over-the-Rhine Neighborhood, Cincinnati, Ohio

The dense, compact urban environment known as Over-the-Rhine is just north of Cincinnati's central business district. Starting around 1830, a large number of German immigrants settled in an area to the north and east of the Miami and Erie Canal where land was readily available and affordable for working-class families, helping convert Cincinnati into one of the "most German" of American cities. The Canal came to be referred to euphemistically as the "Rhine," and the area on the other side, "Over-the-Rhine." The architecture in the area reflects the diverse styles of the time – simple vernacular, muted Greek Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne. The buildings range from row houses to mixed commercial/residential structures and free-standing commercial, industrial and institutional structures including churches, a music hall, beer gardens and breweries. The district's Findlay Market is the only historic public market building still open in the city.

The distinctive mid-to-late-19th-century urban architecture in Over-the-Rhine is in danger due to a combination of inadequate planning, low levels of home ownership and a reduced business presence because of rampant crime, reluctance of investors to commit to renewal and renovation, and an increasing pattern of demolition as authorities seek to address public safety concerns.

Designation of Over-the-Rhine as one of America's most threatened historic places will aid the local Community Council and other organizations, such as the Cincinnati Preservation Association, in their efforts to save and safeguard the area. Only through a diverse, collaborative approach that includes urban planners, corporate and philanthropic organizations, and—most important—community groups and neighborhood residents and stakeholders, will it be possible to stop the deterioration of the buildings and improve the quality of life for area residents.

11. World Trade Center Vesey Street Staircase, New York

The Vesey Street Staircase played a significant role in saving the lives of hundreds of individuals who used it as a means of escape from their offices in the doomed Twin Towers. As a result, it has been dubbed the "Survivors' Staircase".

Before the September 11 attacks, the Vesey Street Staircase was seen and used by the public on a daily basis. Located near the intersection of Vesey and Church streets, it consisted of two granite-clad outdoor flights of stairs and an escalator that led from the World Trade Center plaza to Vesey Street. When terrorists crashed two planes into the Twin Towers, the staircase provided a path of escape for hundreds of people. It is the only surviving above-ground remnant of the original World Trade Center, and a vivid and haunting reminder of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The staircase



World Trade Center, New York, Vesey Street staircase

now stands isolated and consists only of concrete slabs and blocks, a few remaining pieces of stone cladding, and steel supports – but it is nonetheless an authentic and invaluable remnant of the World Trade Center that once stood here.

The staircase is within the footprint of proposed WTC Tower 2, which is being designed by famed architect Norman Foster and is being developed by Silverstein Properties. Public review of the impact of this project on the staircase culminated in early 2007, when the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation announced its proposal to cut up the staircase and to embed several pieces in various locations around the site. Such an inappropriate plan would needlessly strip the Staircase of all its meaning and context. The New York State Historic Preservation Office also objected to this plan, calling for the staircase to be preserved intact.

The staircase structure can and should be moved to a temporary site nearby while construction on the World Trade Center site proceeds. Engineering studies have shown that the staircase can be moved quickly, safely and cost-effectively. The coalition of preservation organizations in the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund have been working with several agencies to identify potential, temporary sites for the staircase, and Governor Spitzer's administration has publicly expressed a willingness to consider the views of the public on this issue, and to consider creative solutions.

At the appropriate time, the staircase should be moved back to the World Trade Center site and displayed as closely as possible to its original location. By maintaining a connection with its original site, the staircase will continue to serve as an authentic link to the historic stories of survival it witnessed.

Just as other cities around the world have successfully developed new buildings around historic ruins and remnants, so can New York City. The Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund is attempting to bring key decision-makers together to commit to preserving this irreplaceable icon.