

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### National Trust for Historic Preservation – 11 Most Endangered Places

Since 1988, the *11 Most Endangered Historic Places* list has been one of the most effective tools in the fight to save America's irreplaceable architectural, cultural, and natural heritage. ICOMOS USA has recommended the lists inclusion in this *Heritage at Risk Report 2001/2002*, in recognition of the important contribution it makes to the potential mitigation of heritage at risk in the USA.

The National Trust annually identifies 11 different places throughout America to help bring home its message about endangered places. The 11 sites chosen each year are threatened by neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. Some are well-known, such as Valley Forge National Historical Park in Pennsylvania and Ellis Island in New York Harbor. Others, like the Kennecott Copper Mines in Alaska or the town of Petosky, Michigan, 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 120 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. The '11 Most' list has been so successful at educating the public that now more than fifteen states and numerous cities and towns publish their own lists of endangered places.

*America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places* has identified more than 120 threatened, one-of-a-kind historic treasures since 1988. While listing does not ensure protection of a site or guarantee funding, the designation has been a powerful tool for raising awareness and rallying resources to save threatened sites in every region of the country. Whether these sites are urban districts or rural landscapes, Native American landmarks or 20<sup>th</sup>-century sports arenas, entire communities or single buildings, the list spotlights historic American places that are threatened by neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy.

#### Recent 11 Most Successes

Since Pittsburgh's Fifth and Forbes Historic Retail Area joined the list in 2000, threatened by widespread demolition as part of a redevelopment plan, developers are working with the city to find more preservation-friendly solutions. President Lincoln and Soldiers' Home, in Washington, D.C., had seriously deteriorated over the years; two weeks after it was placed on the list, President Clinton named it a national monument, which will help raise funds to transform it into a world-class historic site. New Mexico's Montezuma Castle, once threatened by years of neglect, has just completed a successful \$10 million campaign and plans to reopen as an international study center. And thanks to the tireless work of its community leaders, the Atlanta neighborhood of Sweet Auburn, after decades of disinvestment and blight, is once again a flourishing center of African-American life.

#### The 2001 List of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places

##### *Historic American Movie Theatres*

Historic theaters were designed to transport audiences to fanciful, faraway places with their Art Deco, Egyptian and Chinese motifs, bringing a unique dimension to the moviegoing experience. With the advent of multiplex cinemas, movie studios gain influence over distribution companies, helping determine which theaters run their films; often, independent, historic theaters are left out of the loop. Many are forced to close, often demolished in the face of staggering competition from suburban multiplexes. As theaters are frequently located in the midst of their downtowns, they have been centers of community activity and keep many downtowns active long after dark. Closing a historic theater often means the loss of reliable income for surrounding businesses.

##### *Bok Kai Temple, Marysville*

Constructed in 1880 by Chinese immigrants, the Bok Kai Temple long served a flourishing Chinese community first attracted to the area by the California gold rush. Boasting exquisite wall paintings and gilded altars, the temple has been the centerpiece of Marysville's Chinese community for more than a century. Today, though, time and weather have taken their toll, and the temple's murals and furnishings are in jeopardy. In addition, Marysville faces significant economic challenges, and its now dispersed Chinese community lacks the resources to face the daunting task of restoring the temple and its collection alone.

The temple structure is virtually unchanged since its construction in 1880. Magnificent multicolored wall paintings and murals, which depict traditional Chinese values, adorn the temple's exterior walls. The wall paintings are thought to be the only examples of their kind in the US. The temple's center hall has gilded altars, painted statuary and elaborately embroidered ceremonial banners and lanterns. Since its construction, the temple has continuously been used as a house of worship and community meeting place.

Years of water damage have rotted the temple's structural members and threaten its glorious decorative features. Cracks have appeared in the paintings, and pieces of the delicate painted plaster walls have disintegrated and broken away. Additionally, Marysville's historic core has experienced a slow decline; the loss of the Bok Kai Temple would be devastating to the community.

##### *Telluride Valley Floor, Colorado*

No one disputes that Telluride is one of the Rocky Mountains' most beloved vacation spots. The problem is, it's being loved to death.

Nestled among 14,000-foot peaks, Telluride is cradled in a wide valley that, until now, remained as verdant and peaceful as when the Ute Indians hunted there centuries ago. But sprawl has come to the mountains, and now a massive resort may be developed on the 880-acre valley floor, threatening the region's historic context and forever altering one of the Rocky Mountains' last intact mining towns.

Though granted to the Ute Indians in 1868, the valley was overrun with miners in the early 1870s. The first mining camp grew into a town called San Miguel City, whose properties soon

grew too expensive for the average miner. In response, Telluride, a mile up the valley, was born. The railroad came to town in 1890, sharing the valley with a few dairies. In the early 20th century, men played softball on the valley floor while women sunbathed by the runoff ponds.

The land changed hands over the years, ending up in the hands of the San Miguel Valley Corporation, which plans to develop a large hotel complex, a gondola, a golf course, commercial space and housing. Tourism is booming, increasing pressure to develop the area. For that same reason, the stakes are high for the valley floor's preservation: the very qualities that make Telluride unique will be profoundly compromised by the development.

### *CIGNA Campus, Bloomfield, Connecticut*

A widely publicized architectural icon that was once hailed as one of 'ten buildings in America's future' could soon be a thing of the past. When it was completed in 1957, the headquarters of the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company in Bloomfield was immediately recognized as a milestone in the history of modern architecture. Five years later, similar praise was heaped on the headquarters of the Emhart Corporation, built just a short distance away. Now CIGNA Corporation, the owner of both buildings, wants to demolish them and turn the beautifully landscaped site into a sprawling complex of offices, stores and houses clustered around a golf course. A new development plan is needed – one which recognizes the significance of the Connecticut General and Emhart buildings and allows them to remain in place and in active use.

### *Carter G. Woodson Home, Washington, D.C.*

Eighty-five years after Carter G. Woodson created the black history movement, the Washington home where he lived and worked sits abandoned and forgotten, an ironic legacy of the man who spent his life preserving African-American history and culture.

The Victorian 1890s red-brick row house, with the broken windows and overgrown yard, sits squarely in the middle of D.C.'s Shaw neighborhood, a richly historic area undergoing a renaissance. While many of Shaw's grand old homes and classic row houses have been rehabbed, the Woodson home, whose condition worsens by the day, awaits rescue. The home, which is owned by the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History, a non-profit publisher, has been abandoned for nearly a decade. It has suffered extensive interior damage, including structural deterioration caused by water leaks in a number of locations. The Association hopes to restore the property, use it as its headquarters and open it to the public to showcase the life and work of Carter Woodson.

### *Ford Island at Pearl Harbour, Honolulu*

The historic resources remaining from one of the most painfully memorable events in American military history – the attack on Pearl Harbor – are in danger of being lost through a massive development initiative at Pearl Harbor's Ford Island in Honolulu.

Ford Island – the centerpiece of the Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark District – is adjacent to Battleship Row, now home to the USS Missouri Memorial Association, and a few yards away from the memorial to the USS Arizona, which sustained the heaviest loss of life that day. Remnants of bomb craters and signs of the Japanese aircraft's strafing runs are still visible. The original airfield, air tower, World War II hangars, a collection of bungalows,

officers' housing and landscaping with mature Banyan trees remain on the site. Yet these historic resources could be altered forever if there is inadequate planning to protect them.

In 1999 the National Trust and the Historic Hawaii Foundation first learned that the Navy planned major housing development, a festival market place and recreational marina on Ford Island. The National Trust expressed concern over the plans in a letter to then-Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig. Despite ongoing efforts since then – including nearly two years of discussions – resolution has not occurred regarding the future of this landmark and the Navy's plans for developing housing, commercial and recreational uses. The Navy has asked potential developers to be sensitive to the island's historic character, but the Navy's need for new facilities has caused it to move forward without completing the preservation planning needed for one of the nation's most significant 20th-century landmarks. An agreement must be worked out with the Navy to ensure that development on the island follows a comprehensive master plan that gives full and careful consideration of the island's historic resources, starting with a completed cultural resources plan. It is important that a collaborative, public process inform development planning.

### *Miller-Perdue Barn, Grant County, Indiana*

Historic barns add life and color to the rural landscape. In northeast Indiana, an English-style, pre-Civil War barn faithfully served the Miller farm for nearly a century. But as the farming economy changes, old barns like the Millers' are increasingly viewed as obsolete, and across the country, many owners are choosing to dispose of historic barns – either by torching them or neglecting them, rather than consider adapting them for modern farming or other uses.

The Miller-Purdue barn was built in the 1850s by an Indiana farm family. It is a three-gabled, white-painted structure with five cupolas. In 1940, the barn and the 700-acre farm on which it sits were given to Purdue University. For more than 40 years, Purdue agriculture students used the land as an experimental farm. In the late 1980s, the farm, including the barn and other outbuildings, was bought by Wayne Townsend, an Indiana farmer.

When the barn was built 150 years ago, it was used to house livestock. In recent years, however, the agricultural focus in this part of Indiana has moved from cattle to grain crops that require the use of heavy farm equipment. The barn's interior space, though massive, has ceiling heights meant to accommodate cattle – not combines and tractors – and would require expensive reconfiguration. That shift has left the Miller-Purdue barn – and countless others like it – with no apparent purpose on the farm.

The solution is neither simple nor one-dimensional. Saving historic barns requires a concerted effort involving elected officials at the local, State and national levels, preservation groups and, most important, farmers and owners. The key to success is helping farmers and other owners understand that reconfiguring and re-using historic barns can often make more sense economically than tearing down these sturdy old friends.

### *Stevens Creek Settlements, Lincoln, Nebraska*

Set in a gently rolling landscape just east of Lincoln, the fertile Stevens Creek valley has been considered prime agricultural land for more than a century, and many of its farms are still owned by descendants of the first settlers. Those farmers – plus the bikers and hikers who treasure the area's quiet beauty – now face the threat of a proposed expressway and associated development that

will bring noise, traffic and sprawl to this region of fields, woods and history.

Stevens Creek was attracting settlers at least a decade before Nebraska became a state in 1867. After the Civil War, large numbers of German, Swedish, Czech, Swiss and Irish immigrants swelled the area's population. Building types and materials, ranging from stone and wood-frame farmhouses to log barns and pre-cast concrete outbuildings, trace the history of architecture and farming practices over the past 150 years. Two sites, the Stevens Creek Stock Farm and the Herter-Sartore Farmstead, are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and several others have been deemed eligible for listing.

Proposed amendments to the Lincoln/Lancaster County comprehensive plan may affect the protection of historic resources and raise the specter of increased development in the Stevens Creek region. Even more ominous is a proposal by city and county officials to construct an expressway that would cut a 300-foot-wide swath through the area, negatively impacting several historic properties and irrevocably altering the area's rural character. Of several possible routes being considered, the one apparently most favored by some elected officials would cause the greatest damage to the area's historic resources.

The Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department staff has not endorsed the route most harmful to historic resources. Over the summer, the local elected officials will vote on a route for the proposed highway. Protection of historic resources and management of sprawl should be priority components of the future planning agenda for the Stevens Creek Basin. In addition, City and County elected officials and the Federal Highway Administration should choose a route for the proposed highway that poses the least possible threat to the valley's historic farms.

### *Prairie Churches of North Dakota*

Were it not for the prairie church, the vast North Dakota landscape would stretch unbroken to the horizon. Often founded by first-generation settlers from Germany, Poland, Iceland, Russia and Scandinavia, the simple prairie church was usually the first building to go up when a town was settled - and the last to close its doors if the community died out. But now many of these buildings are threatened. Of North Dakota's 2000 church structures, more than 400 are vacant and threatened by inadequate maintenance and demolition.

Flooded with settlers in the late 19th century, North Dakota saw a population peak by 1930. Since then, many rural congregations have struggled to keep their churches going in the face of declining population and agriculture. Many of these structures still contain irreplaceable artwork, stained glass windows, carvings and statues. Architectural styles vary from simple folk vernacular buildings to Gothic, Greek Revival, Tudor, Prairie and Romanesque.

Rather than see them slowly fall to pieces, some church leaders have chosen to burn or demolish their church buildings when left no alternative. Seventy-eight percent of the State's churches are in towns of fewer than 2500 people; 57% of them were built before 1950. At the rate they are falling into disuse, 50 more may close this decade. But recent census data indicates the population trend is changing: the State has grown for the first time in 70 years - potentially good news for prairie churches, although its growth rate is still the nation's lowest.

Prairie churches need not go vacant. They have been adaptively re-used as community centers, libraries, day-care centers and

museums. Or they can be preserved for occasional uses such as family and community reunions, summer services, weddings and baptisms. For the most part, prairie churches are simply built and easy to maintain.

### *Los Caminos del Rio, Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas*

Stretching for 200 miles between the cities of Laredo and Brownsville, the area known as 'Los Caminos del Rio' encompasses farms and ranches, fast-growing cities and dusty small towns whose history and architecture reflect a rich blend of Hispanic, Latino and Anglo cultures. The region is also a patchwork of newfound economic prosperity and longstanding poverty - a perplexing paradox that has thwarted efforts by agencies on both sides of the US-Mexican border to preserve historic buildings and neighborhoods and encourage heritage tourism.

The area's older buildings and communities are threatened by poorly planned growth and inappropriate development (much of it fueled by NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement), apathy, lack of funding, and simple neglect. In Rio Grande City, for example, more than half of the town's historic properties are vacant and deteriorating.

Public education, adoption of 'smart-growth' philosophies, development of heritage tourism programs, identification of public and private funding sources, and a strengthened commitment to preservation from political leaders are needed to keep the region's unique heritage from crumbling to dust.

### *Historic Jackson Ward, Richmond Virginia*

Since the late 19th century, this neighborhood has been one of America's largest African-American districts, once bursting with the sounds of jazz and prosperity. But in the 1950s, highway construction ripped Jackson Ward in two, an act that started decades of urban decline. And now Jackson Ward is in danger of losing its heritage forever.

Founded by free blacks and immigrants, Jackson Ward became a gerrymandered voting district in the 1870s that kept those groups voting in one area. When early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Jim Crow laws separated the races, the people of Jackson Ward created a self-sustaining economy that made the area famous as the 'Black Wall Street' and alive with theaters, clubs and restaurants. Jackson Ward boasts the first African-American bank in the country; the home of Maggie Walker, America's first female bank president; Richmond's oldest public school building; and wood-frame row houses with cast-iron porches. A National Register inventory lists more than 600 significant historic structures in the neighborhood.

When desegregation came to Richmond, many residents moved away and many businesses dried up. Urban renewal in the 1970s and 1980s caused widespread demolition and insensitive development; since then, many of the neighborhood's historic buildings have fallen into disrepair and approximately 100 of them are vacant. A convention center built in the 1980s has recently expanded; its 2003 re-opening threatens to overwhelm Jackson Ward.

Although Jackson Ward has the tireless support of residents, preservationists and the City, it needs a master plan, sustained investment and local protection measures.