

LEARNING FROM NEW ORLEANS: Columbians at Work after Hurricane Katrina

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita took a great toll on the lives of residents of the Gulf Coast, and also inflicted great damage to the architectural heritage of this region. As the attention shifts to reconstruction in these storm-ravaged areas, numerous preservation organizations, both private and governmental, are trying to pick up the pieces. We got in touch with some of the people from Columbia's Historic Preservation program who have been involved with the preservation process in the wake of this terrible disaster.

Eleanor Burke '98 was born and raised in New Orleans. She pursued her degree at Columbia with the intention of returning to work in preservation there. She is currently

the Principal Architectural Historian for the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC). This Commission regulates over 16,000 properties located outside the French Quarter, and has a staff of only four. Since late September it has issued more than one thousand Certificates of Appropriateness.

Eleanor reports from New Orleans, "My work shifted dramatically the first few weeks after [the hurricanes]. Immediately following our return, the staff of the HDLC completed a windshield survey of all thirteen historic districts in order to get a definitive count of collapsed buildings, buildings in imminent danger of collapse,

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A damaged home in New Orleans.
(photo by Michael Devonshire)

IN MEMORIAM: Shirley Driks (1921-2006)

Shirley Driks (née Kron) was born in 1921 in Poland. She immigrated to the United States at five years of age with her family, eventually marrying her husband Samuel Driks and having a son. During most of the 1980's and 90's, Mrs. Driks worked as Administrator of the Historic Preservation Graduate Program at Columbia. In the days before everyone had a personal computer, Mrs. Driks also did typing for many writers, historians, and Columbia students. When she wasn't working or typing, Mrs. Driks was a talented seamstress, knitter and collector of fine jewelry. An avid fan of the New York City Ballet, she also regularly attended classical music concerts. She also enjoyed traveling,

visiting former students in Puerto Rico, Turkey, Greece, Portugal and other locations in the United States and throughout the world. One of the greatest pleasures in her life was her relationships with students and faculty from the Historic Preservation Program, many of which continued long after the students graduated. She spoke often about how much her time at the program meant to her and about how much she enjoyed being able to remain a continuing part of the lives of her many friends. She is survived by her son Adam Driks and his wife Jean.

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Letter from the President

As spring arrives and alums are celebrating the end of the cold weather, the first-year students are finalizing their studio analysis of 14th Street, and the second-year students feel an great sense of relief with the completion of their theses.

PA has been hard at work with some great events. We had a successful Fall Party on the pier as arranged by Rebecca Birch Dowling '04, who also organized our Spring Party at the National Arts Club. Another success was the Work Day at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, planned by Dan Lane, which gave members a rare opportunity to tour a site closed to the public. Our ongoing series of Happy Hours, put together by Seri Worden '02, give students an informal opportunity to meet alums. Please keep your membership and contact information current so we can keep you in the loop.

We also have a few additions to the board, and the board looks as if it will be as dynamic as ever. Please welcome our newest members: George Jaramillo '05, Jacqui Hogans '05, and Alvin Ho '02.

PA has been busy revamping our web site and our email updates. New board member Alvin Ho will take over as webmaster and will soon have the site in order and running smoothly. Feel free to contact him at update@preservation-alumni.org with suggestions or information for the site.

I want to thank the new editors of the PA Memo, Sybil Young '04 and Britton Baine '04, for putting together a great spring issue. Please contact them if you have an article that you would like to submit. You can email them at info@preservation-alumni.org.

I look forward to seeing you all soon, and as always please check our website (www.preservation-alumni.org) for news about our upcoming events.

Best Wishes,
Jamie Schroeder



Columbia alumnae Eleanor Burke (left) and Lisa Kersavage (right) in New Orleans. (photo by Elliot Perkins)

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and structurally-compromised sites.

The information and photographs were compiled into a database by Lisa Kersavage '98 who volunteered with the HDLC for a week in October. This database soon became crucial to several New Orleans agencies that used our assessments to determine the scope of the storm's impact on the Historic Districts and to determine potential sites for demolition and redevelopment."

Several alumni are in New Orleans working for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Andrea Kaiser '04 works in the Public Assistance division of FEMA, as a Project Officer. She is responsible for publicly-owned buildings, including parks and recreation centers, libraries, community centers and schools. Andrea says, "My work is truly fulfilling. I write out the Project Worksheets, which are like grant proposals, for the applicants to submit to FEMA and the state for their funding. This involves site visits and assessments, writing damage descriptions, scopes of work and cost estimating, and sometimes developing plans to

improve the site to better withstand another hurricane or storm." Mary Neustadter '85 spent several months with FEMA and was responsible for all Section 106 Reviews taking place in the city. Laetitia Rankin '96 is responsible for determinations of eligibility on all of the buildings scheduled for demolition—no small task as this includes approximately 15,000 buildings. Mark Soeth '05 also works on eligibility determinations, some Section 106 Reviews and provides restoration recommendations to project officers. His current projects include a WPA fountain at the New Orleans Lakeside Airport, and masonry conservation at Fort Jackson, built circa 1832.

Michael Devonshire, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Historic Preservation, worked as a volunteer on a National Trust team and plans to return. He spent a great amount of his time assessing sites that had been "red-tagged" (marked for demolition) by FEMA or other agencies, but which the National Trust hoped could be restored. Michael says, "We were nothing less than a 'preservation hit squad,' hitting the ground, compiling

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repair scopes of work for homeowners who live in historic districts, but didn't know how to overturn the "red-tag" process or begin the process of repairing a historic house." He says the devastation in New Orleans was more than he had ever imagined. "At some houses it was 'reverse facadism' – the front of a house being completely torn off by the water surge, leaving a vignette of domestic life behind on the interior. One particularly compelling image which I will never forget is a house with the front wall torn off, but in the exposed bedroom, a closet door open revealing all of the clothes which the owner had no time to collect. The writing on the search/rescue designation on the concrete of the porch indicated 'one dead in attic.' An equally impressive image was that of a 25-ton barge which had been washed ashore,

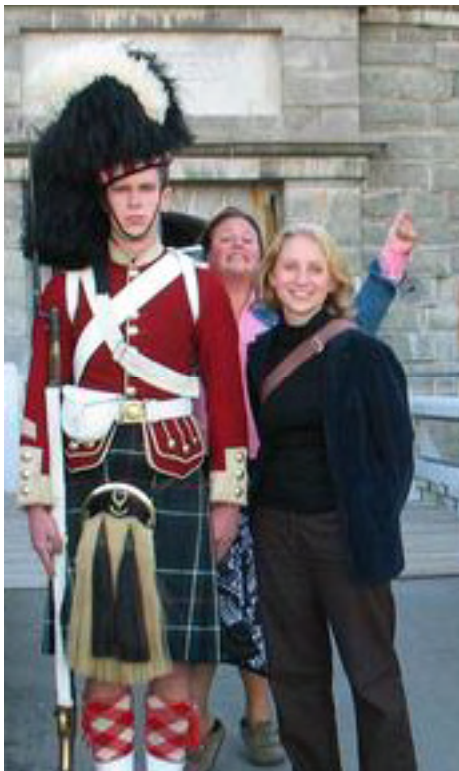
coming to rest on a house." Michael candidly points out: "If we watch the media up here, we might be convinced that all is being taken care of down there, which is far from the actual situation. They need help there; they need folks with a knowledge of restoration, stabilization, the power of culture, and sometimes just a willingness to get hands dirty."

For more information on volunteering opportunities and other ways to help, visit <http://www.nationaltrust.org/hurricane/index.html>



Photograph of a barge that landed on top of a house in New Orleans. (photo by Michael Devonshire)

STUDENT NEWS: Columbia Represented at International Conference



Students Lauren Cato (left) and Maggie Oldfather (right) with a Halifax policeman. (photo by Cassandra Smith)

In September 2005, second-year students Lauren Cato, Craig Oleszewski, Maggie Oldfather, and Cassandra Smith, and professors Joan Berkowitz and George Wheeler attended the Association for Preservation Technology International (APT) Annual Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. They attended sessions and workshops on cemetery conservation practices, certification standards for conservators, and ASTM Standard updates.

The Columbia students took advantage of the networking opportunities at APTI, meeting various conservators and architects who might be able to offer assistance not only in thesis completion but also the impending job search. Of course, the group even found time to take in the sights, tastes, and sounds of Halifax.

The Historic Preservation Program now has an APT student chapter.

There are currently 18 members, some of whom attended the APT Northeast Chapter's Annual Meeting earlier this year in Albany, NY. First- and second-year students submitted abstracts for posters and papers to be presented at the meeting. Students won awards for "Best Paper" and "Best Poster" – Sara Adams for her presentation on her thesis topic of graffiti conservation and a group of students – Sara Adams, Lauren Cato, Andria Darby, Craig Oleszewski, Maggie Oldfather, and Cassandra Smith – for their posters on mortar analysis techniques.

-Cassandra Smith

PA FALL PARTY

In late October, PA hosted the new student reception and annual fall party at Pier 63 adjacent to Chelsea Piers and the historic John J. Harvey fireboat. Students and alumni mingled under the open sky and enjoyed amazing nighttime views of the New Jersey waterfront. A bonfire warded off the evening chill and added to the ambience.

PA President Jamie Schroeder announced the recipient for the Clio and James Marston Fitch award. Second-year student Jessica Williams won the prize for her paper titled *Labor, Silence, Penitence: The New Jersey State Prison at Trenton*.

Claudia Funke, Curator of Rare Books at Avery Library, thanked PA for this year's donations to the library's Rare Books Collection.

- Rebecca Birch Dowling



PA Board members Amy Diehl (left) and Melissa Baldock (right) help paint the windows at the Dyckman Farmhouse in Inwood. (Photo by Susan De Vries)

ALUMNI ROLL UP SLEEVES FOR A DUTCH FARMHOUSE



(Photo by Susan De Vries)

On September 24, 2005, Preservation Alumni helped spiff up the Dyckman Farmhouse as it neared its date for reopening. Built in 1784 in what is now the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan, the Dutch Colonial style farmhouse was once part of several hundred acres of farmland owned by the Dyckman family. In 1916, when development was rapidly transforming the neighborhood, two descendants of the Dyckmans restored the farmhouse and donated it to the City for use as a museum, which it has remained ever since. Today the farmhouse sits at its original location, although on a much smaller plot of land, at Broadway and 207th Street.

Nearly 90 years after its initial restoration, the building needed major repairs to ensure it would be able to welcome visitors for another century. In 2003, the historic farmhouse temporarily closed to the public in order to carry out several major restoration projects - including upgrades to lighting and fire detection systems, re-pointing of the brick façade, and restoration of exterior clapboards and interior floorboards.

PA volunteers met with Dyckman Farmhouse Director, Susan De Vries, a 1996 graduate of Columbia's Historic Preservation program. Before putting the students and alumni to work, Susan gave them a tour of the farmhouse and its grounds. Although the major repairs to the farmhouse had been completed, it was not quite ready for the general public, and PA was there to help bring the house one step closer to being ready for visitors. The volunteers white-washed the picket fence surrounding the farmhouse's kitchen garden, and in the afternoon, raked leaves on the grounds and washed the Broadway grime from the farmhouse's green shutters.

The Dyckman Farmhouse has since reopened to the general public and is worth a visit, particularly to admire PA's paint job on the picket fence.

-Melissa Baldock

JAMES MARSTON FITCH COLLOQUIUM AND CAREER DAY

Preservation Alumni recruited fifteen preservation-related architecture firms, agencies, and organizations to participate in this year's Career Day. The event attracted many of the current Historic Preservation graduate students who are looking for summer internships and job opportunities.

This year's colloquium, titled "Resurrection: Reconstruction and Denial," addressed preservation, renovation, and reconstruction in the context of practical objectives, constraints, and interpretations of the original architect's concepts and design intent. Among the presenters was Columbia University Professor Andrew Dolkart who provided an overview of the practice of preservation and the reuse and reconstruction of historic buildings, citing examples from war-torn Europe after World War II. Neil Levine from Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD) and the Frank Lloyd Wright Conservancy presented concepts relating to "posthumous production," using Frank Lloyd Wright's Blue Sky Mausoleum as an example of the challenge for preservationists working with designs that

have been built after an architect's death. Toshiko Mori, also from Harvard's GSD and Principal of Toshiko Mori Architects, spoke about the current practice of architecture and the objective to be authentic and true to the present while working with historic buildings. Her firm's design for the visitor center at Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin D. Martin Estate in Buffalo, NY contrasts Wright's design by essentially countering Wright's use of opacity and wood with transparency and glass while ensuring that the new design complements the original Wright design without diminishing the significance of each period's design or designer. Ted Lownie of Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects presented the reconstruction and restoration objectives involving the Darwin D. Martin Estate. The latter half of the colloquium included a presentation by Andrian von Buttlar of the Technische Universität in Berlin that addressed determining which parts of our past and built history should be preserved for the future. Columbia University Professor Joan Berkowitz of Jablonski-Berkowitz Conservation presented the excava-

tion of the portion of the Battery wall that was recently uncovered in Lower Manhattan.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion moderated by Anne Van Ingen from the New York State Council. The panel comprised several alums including Judith Saltzman of Li/Saltzman Architects, Matthew Buer of the Madison Avenue BID, Ward Dennis of Higgins and Quasebarth, historical consultant Christopher Neville, and Stephen Gottlieb, AIA.

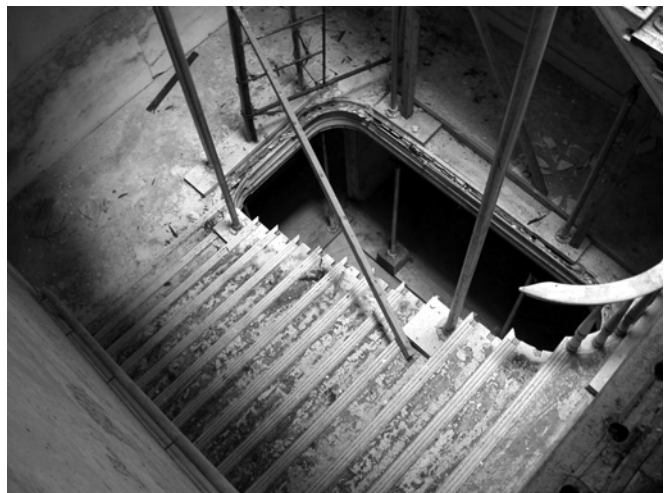
- Amy Diehl

PA SPRING WORK DAY, BROOKLYN NAVY YARD

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Brooklyn Naval Hospital
(Photo by Britton Baine)



Brooklyn Naval Hospital, main staircase
(Photo by Britton Baine)



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PA SPRING WORK DAY, BROOKLYN NAVY YARD



Left: HP Faculty Member Francoise Bollack . Right: PA Board Members Seri Worden and Alvin Ho.
(Photos by Kevin Seymour)

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