

MERGING THE BUCOLIC SUPERHIGHWAY OF THE GARDEN STATE WITH THE VIRTUAL SUPERHIGHWAY OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Editors' Note:

The editors of the MEMO are always on the lookout for interesting stories about the activities of our fellow alumni. In this issue, we are pleased to publish the following article by Gregory Dietrich (CU-MSHP/CU-MSRD '03), detailing his documentation of an unusual historic resource: New Jersey's Garden State Parkway.

Significance can appear in the most unlikely of places. In fact, it is not uncommon for something that the public has spent their entire lives taking for granted to acquire new meaning over time and become significant. New Jersey's Garden State Parkway (GSP) is one such example: Constructed between 1946 and 1957 and stretching 173 miles from the New York State line to Cape May, the GSP has been a boon for motorists, expediting trips for hordes of business commuters and seaside weekenders alike for over 50 years. But the GSP is more than just an expressway—it is an historic resource.

In 2001, the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJ-HPO) determined that the GSP was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for its innovative design, which combined the high speed and efficiency of a modern superhighway with the naturalistic elements of a historic parkway. In making its determination, the NJ-

HPO became responsible for ensuring that any proposals to alter the GSP via state or federal funding or permitting would have to consider the potential effects on the resource. This requirement eventually resulted in an interesting and innovative new resource: the development of a site on the World Wide Web documenting and explaining to the general public the history of this historic and important road.

1. CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATIONS

Falling within the domain of Cultural Resource Management (CRM), the laws protecting cultural resources such as the GSP have their origins in the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Protection Act on the federal level and various historic preservation and environmental laws on the state level. Although federal and state laws concerning cultural resources do not offer the same levels of protection found in local preservation ordinances, they do have the capacity to foster activities that support preservation objectives. These activities are known as *mitigations* and can vary depending on the site's significance and the project's anticipated effects. Mitigations may include such actions as excavation of an archaeo-



Cape May Terminus of the Garden State Parkway

Photo credit: New Jersey Turnpike Authority

logical site, preserving the resource in place by buffering it from new development with plantings, relocation of the resource, or—if demolition is unavoidable—professionally documenting it via text, photographs or drawings. Mitigations may also include preservation easements, restoration of physically or thematically associated resources, or the creation of educational materials to highlight a resource's history and significance.

In the past, such educational materials have taken a variety of forms, from interpretive signage to murals to pamphlets that employ text and graphics. Among these, interpretive signage is widely encouraged since it has the capacity to convey the history of the resource in its original location, thereby lending a certain element of authenticity to the viewer experience. By contrast, pamphlets have the disadvantage of reaching

a limited number of people due to a finite number of copies housed at a finite number of repositories. In an effort to avoid this limitation but also to reach as wide an audience as possible, State Historic Preservation Offices regulating CRM projects increasingly prefer the Internet as a mitigation tool for promoting historic resources to a much wider audience.

(see *PARKWAY*, p. 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Preserving the Garden State Parkway.....Page 1

Preservation Alumni Workdays.....Pages 2-3

In Memoriam: Professor Miner....Page 5

Glass House Tour.....Page 5

Preservation Alumni, Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization founded and run by alumni of the Historic Preservation Program at the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University. The mission of PA is to support and enrich the Historic Preservation program by advising and assisting the students, faculty and alumni, and to advance preservation as a diverse field of public and professional endeavor.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Cleary Larkin

Vice President

Mikel Travisano

Secretary

Jennifer Most

Treasurer

Cristiana Peña

Yiannis Avramides (1st-year rep.)

Britton Baine

Joselito Corpus

Richard Handler

Alvin Ho

Lindsay McCook (2nd-year rep.)

Marissa Marvelli

Lindsay Smith

Sabine van Riel

Blaire Walsh

Sybil Young

The MEMO welcomes submissions from alumni, students, faculty and friends.

Please contact us at:

Preservation Alumni

P.O. Box 669

Peck Slip Station

New York, NY 10272

info@preservationalumni.org

Editors: Sybil Young

Britton Baine

PA SPONSORS FALL AND SPRING WORKDAYS

Fall Workday: Ft. Totten, Queens

On a stormy day this past fall, Preservation Alumni teamed up with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to tackle an exciting project: refinishing nineteenth-century wooden pews which will be re-installed in the recently-restored Chapel of the Sisters in Prospect Cemetery, Jamaica, Queens. Despite the dampness of the day, a team of alumni trekked out to Fort Totten, adjacent to the Bayside Terrace neighborhood of northern Queens, where the pews were being stored, to complete the work.

Volunteers were also provided with the opportunity of touring the Fort Totten Historic District, home to numerous historic structures built between the Civil War and World War II, including the 1862 Fort Totten Battery. The tour of the historic district was led by Columbia Preservation alumnus John Krawchuk, Director of Historic Preservation at the Parks Department's Capital Division, and the tour of the Battery was provided by a New York City Parks Department Ranger.

PA would like to thank the Prospect Cemetery Association which generously donated the funding to purchase supplies for the day's work, and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation for providing PA volunteers the opportunity to work on such an exciting project.

For more information on Fort Totten, visit:

<http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/forttotten/>

For more information on the Chapel of the Sisters and Prospect Cemetery, visit:

<http://www.prospectcemeteryassociation.org/>

- *The Editors*

Spring Workday: Morris-Jumel Mansion, Washington Heights

Standing in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, Morris-Jumel Mansion is Manhattan's oldest extant house, and on April 18, the Historic House Trust and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation collaborated with the Mansion and Preservation Alumni for a spring workday project.

Volunteers arrived at the house at 9:30 AM on a sunny Saturday morning to clean moss and algae from the Mansion's brownstone and faux-stone stucco foundation course. The majority of the biological growth was found to be concentrated on the north side of the Mansion's base, with smaller amounts visible on the front porch stairs. The volunteers used a mild, 1:10 diluted solution of Prosoco Bio Wash, a non-toxic cleaning solution, and soft nylon bristle brushes to remove the unsightly green material. Some of the brownstone, which is more than 200 years old, required very gentle cleaning with soft sponges in order not to cause damage to the flaking and delaminating stones. The growth proved to be readily receptive to the volunteers' efforts and the cleaning solution, and in fairly short order the walls were clean. The stucco and stone were then thoroughly rinsed to remove any of the cleaning solution which remained on the surface, though a certain amount of the solution soaked into the wall surfaces and will prevent regrowth of the moss and algae for months to come.

Morris-Jumel and The Historic House Trust supplied the Bio Wash, along with mixing buckets, gloves, eye protection and brushes, and PA provided doughnuts and coffee for breakfast, and pizza for lunch.

Morris-Jumel Mansion is the second historic property in the area to be worked on recently by PA volunteers. In 2005 and 2007, PA also sponsored workdays at nearby Dyckman House, where volunteers painted the kitchen garden fence, cleaned the porch and windows and planted numerous flowers in the surrounding gardens.

- *Contributed by Mikel Travisano*

FALL WORKDAY PHOTOS



Photos by: Sybil Young

SPRING WORKDAY PHOTOS



Photos by: Britton Baine

2.

THE GARDEN STATE
PARKWAY HISTORY WEB-
SITE

In 2004, an electric utility's proposal to upgrade a transmission alignment running alongside and parallel to the GSP through Ocean, Burlington, and Atlantic Counties required a state wetlands permit, thereby incurring NJ-HPO oversight. In response to the adverse physical and visual effects posed by the reconfiguration and enlargement of the existing transmission alignment, the NJ-HPO issued a series of permit conditions as a means of mitigating these adverse effects on the GSP. Among them was the creation of a website that would explore the GSP's history and significance. Creating a website entailed coordination between the applicant (Atlantic City Electric), cultural resource consultant (Cultural Resource Consulting Group), web designer (Hamptons Online), and owner (The New Jersey Turnpike Authority).

It also required substantial research at the Turnpike Authority's archives in order to cull both historical information and graphics which would ultimately provide the site's content.

In telling the story of the GSP, there were multiple aspects to be considered that included its planning, design, construction, various roadside features, and overall impacts, as well as the human-interest aspects of its development. There were also "quotable quotes," statistical data, and trivia that had the capacity to enrich the story. As archival research uncovered a rich assortment of historic photographs, postcards, and maps to support these ideas, the form of the website began to emerge. At the recommendation of the web designer, Flash technology was used for its ability to offer high-resolution graphics and animation. Each theme was represented by a color postcard image which in turn became the background for accompanying text and photographs. Supplementing this information were "fun



The Essex County section of the Garden State Parkway featured low-sprung, stone-faced bridges and wide, grassy medians.

Photo credit: New Jersey Turnpike Authority

facts" which took the form of sidebars incorporating the quotes, data, and trivia. This diversity of information and visual matter has produced an educational resource that has appeal to both parkway enthusiasts and non-enthusiasts alike.

As a stop on the World Wide Web's virtual superhighway, the GSP history website has the ability to engender a wide variety of visitors and in doing so, to honor the State of New Jersey's mission to promote a monumental ex-

ample of its unconventional legacy. To take the journey, visit www.gsphistory.com.

In the capacities of project manager and architectural historian, Mr. Dietrich oversaw the development and coordination of the website mentioned in this article, and provided editorial input for the site's ultimate launch. He is the sole practitioner of Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting, (www.gdpreservationconsulting.com), located in New York City.



The first car passed through the Bergen Toll Plaza on July 1st, 1955.

Photo credit: New Jersey Turnpike Authority



Among the various ways in which the New Jersey Highway Authority promoted the GSP was the Miss Parkway Beauty Contest which was held during the 1960s.

Photo credit: New Jersey Turnpike Authority

IN MEMORIAM



DOROTHY MINER
1936-2008

Preservation Alumni notes with regret the death of Professor Dorothy Miner in October of last year. In an effort to memorialize, in a small way, her contributions to the school and the deep influence she had on her many students, PA reached out to former students and asked for memories of Dorothy as a teacher, mentor and friend. Below is reprinted just one of the heartfelt letters we received:

This past March, as I was attending the Goucher conference, I thought so much about Dorothy – it had been she who told me about the many virtues of the conference. When I read Thomas Merton, I think of Dorothy passing on a flyer to me announcing some upcoming Merton lectures or encouraging me to attend her Church, Corpus Christi. When I walk by the Starbucks on Broadway where we would meet, when I cite some aspect of municipal, state or federal preservation legislation, when I pass by Grand Central Station or St. Barts or the Society for Ethical Culture, when I am putting power-points together, when I drive by the future Manhattanville

campus, or see the acronym DASNY, I am especially grateful that I took Dorothy's preservation law class before she died. Although I knew of Dorothy long before I met her, and had attended events in her company, I didn't have the opportunity to actually meet her until Jan Pokorny's 90th birthday party. Standing on the terrace [of Alvar Aalto's Kaufmann Conference Center], overlooking the UN in the twilight, I was deeply impressed with her sharp memory for detail, her far-flung travels, her faithful love of her departed husband, and her passion for preservation law. We spoke on and off after that meeting and it was she who encouraged me to apply for the post-graduate certificate program at Columbia. I will always be grateful to Dorothy for having provided me with the gifts of academic, spiritual, intellectual, and professional mentorship. I know I am a better preservationist because of her.

-Meisha Hunter, (CU-HP Advanced Cert. Prog., '08)

MEMORIAL FUND

Also in memory of Professor Miner, the Columbia University Historic Preservation Program has established the Dorothy Miner Memorial Travel Fellowship Fund. This fund will aim to help students in the Preservation program cover travel costs associated with their thesis research. Further information about this fund, including information for anyone wishing to make a donation, can be found at <http://dorothyminermemorial.wordpress.com/>.

- The Editors

GLASS HOUSE TOUR

In April, Preservation Alumni organized a private, members-only tour of Philip Johnson's Glass House site in New Canaan, Connecticut. On the 25th of the month, 20 PA members and affiliates spent an interesting and instructive Saturday afternoon touring the buildings and grounds and hearing about the architectural philosophy and life of Philip Johnson.



Photo by: Britton Baine

Photo by: Sybil Young

PRESERVATION

ALUMNI

FALL

WORKDAY



Preservation Alumni members pose with the Throg's Neck Bridge atop Fort Totten Battery during PA's annual fall workday. See article on page 2.

- Photo by Sybil Young



PRESERVATION ALUMNI OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

POST OFFICE BOX 669
PECK SLIP STATION
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10272-0669

PA GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE GENEROSITY OF OUR
CORPORATE SPONSORS:



Architects & Planners LLP



JAN HIRD POKORNY ASSOCIATES
39 WEST 37TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10018
TELEPHONE 212.759.6462 FACSIMILE 212.759.6540

WWW.PRESERVATIONALUMNI.ORG