
PETER B. DEDEK
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
FOR DESIGNERS
BLOOMSBURY

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PREFACE

People are attracted to historic architecture for a variety of reasons. Some see it as beautiful, others are interested in the heritage it represents, and some individuals see it in environmental terms as offering opportunities to recycle whole structures, landscapes, entire neighborhoods, and cities. Historic buildings come in all shapes and sizes and represent a plethora of styles, periods of history, irreplaceable building materials, and unique craftsmanship. In a world so often dominated by uniformity and reproduction, historic sites offer variety and authenticity. Unlike contrived modern environments, such as shopping centers, resorts, and Disney World, historic places show us the quirky, the unexpected, the grand statements and intricate details left by previous generations. This creates a sense of identification with the past and the feeling that a particular place is special in a way no other could be.

Because of their variety and complexity, working with historic buildings can be challenging and complicated. With factors such as building codes, space planning, accessibility requirements, and aesthetics, designing new built environments is difficult enough, but rehabilitating historic buildings also involves protecting fragile decorative elements, remediating decay, shoring up obsolete and often complicated structural systems, and modifying historic floor plans designed for uses and lifestyles that sometimes no longer exist. Historic design is as much a process of conservation and stewardship as expression and construction. Historic design combines many skills and talents: creativity, curation, research, planning, negotiation. The field of historic preservation is dynamic and multidisciplinary. Preservation intersects with many other disciplines, including architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, urban planning, history, and law. Working in concert with these diverse fields, preservationists seek to save unique, often beautiful places, large and small, which help define the American character.

Preservationists engage in a vast array of endeavors, performing activities such as renovating and rehabilitating historic buildings and interiors, creating historic districts, promoting urban revitalization, studying the history and significance of old buildings and sites, reviewing and creating land-use regulations, and pursuing preservation law cases. What all preservationists have in common is an ethic, the belief that saving and caring for historic places serves society as a whole and enriches the lives of all Americans by providing a direct connection to history and creating a unique sense of place. Historic landmarks cultivate personal and civic identities. Preservationists believe that the interests of corporations, governmental agencies, and individuals should sometimes be tempered by the need to retain historic places.

Historic preservation not only concerns history; if practiced well, it also conserves the environment and natural resources. The preservation of historic sites, neighborhoods, and landscapes can save vast amounts of energy and prevents perfectly serviceable building materials, such as historic brick and stone and old-growth timber, from going to the landfill. Because it works on such a grand scale, preservation can form the basis of the ultimate re-use and recycling program.

This book focuses on how historic preservation impacts the education and work of architects and interior designers. Because the preservation field is so broad, involving problems as diverse as conserving old wallpaper, planning traffic patterns, and educating visitors at historic sites, attempting to provide a sufficient survey of the entire field in a manageable book would

be difficult if not impossible. By concentrating on preservation issues architects and interior designers are likely to encounter in the course their education and their professional lives, this book seeks to provide an introduction to preservation theory and practice as it relates to design. Although there is a great variety of historic sites and resources, such as districts, archeological sites, and historic cultural landscapes, this book emphasizes the identification, documentation, preferred treatments, and best practices in the rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings and interiors.

Designed to be read from beginning to end in a linear fashion, the facts, terms, and concepts introduced in earlier chapters are often referenced and discussed in greater detail in later ones. However, this book can also be used as a reference for those working with historic design projects throughout the design process, from the initial identification and documentation of historic resources to design conception through schematic design, design development, construction documents, and construction.

As increasing numbers of aging buildings across America are being preserved and will require rehabilitation and modification for new uses sooner or later, it is important that architects and designers understand the rationale and methodology of historic preservation. In the past, the fields of architecture and interior design emphasized new construction and were sometimes hostile to preservation. One reason for this is that saving buildings was seen as bad for business, because preservation might reduce the need for new construction. Another reason for this is that many architects and designers embrace the design fields because they want to express their personal aesthetic and produce work that is contemporary or even revolutionary. As it turns out, historic buildings present many challenges for designers working with them, making rehabilitation projects as involved, or even more so than new construction. This creates plenty of work, and there are also a lot of situations where impressive design originality and innovation can be appropriately expressed within historic buildings or in their proximity. The following chapters describe many of the pitfalls and opportunities designers encounter when working with historic architecture.

This book starts with a history of historic preservation in the United States. Then it discusses governmental involvement in preservation at the national, state, and local levels, and also outlines private sector preservation activities. The text also has a discussion of the factors that make a property historic and outlines methods of researching historic sites. The book's main focus, however, is on the design-related aspects of the field, such as building restoration and rehabilitation, adaptive-use, conserving historic building materials, researching and inspecting historic buildings, managing the historical design process, promoting accessibility in historic buildings, and green design in historic architecture.

The text is divided into three sections that build on each other in a logical order. The first introduces the field of historic preservation with a brief history of its practice in the United States in Chapter 1, and Chapters 2 and 3 cover the roles of government and the private sector. Because it does not contain a review of architectural styles, this book is intended to be used in conjunction with a book or website that identifies and describes the styles of historic American architecture.

Section Two focuses on the practice of historic preservation, beginning in Chapter 4, with defining what makes a property historic and outlines methods of researching and documenting historic properties. Chapter 5 reviews the practice and theory of historic preservation law.

Chapter 6 examines approaches to the management and rehabilitation of historic buildings. The second half of Section Two covers technological aspects of historic preservation with a survey of the properties and methods of caring for a range of historic building materials in Chapter 7, a survey of common natural and man-made threats to historic buildings in Chapter 8, and methods of investigating a building to determine its date of construction in Chapter 9.

Section Three addresses issues and methods of preservation design. Chapter 10 discusses the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* and their appropriate application in design projects. Chapter 11 covers programming and managing historic design projects. Chapters 12 and 13 consider two aspects of socially responsible preservation design: universal design and green building.

The book concludes with a brief look at emerging trends in historic preservation. Each chapter begins with a list of objectives that preview the topics of discussion and ends study questions and, where appropriate, with visual quizzes to help students internalize and retain the chapter content. A list of references provides sources for further research. Within each chapter, new terms are highlighted in boldface and defined where they are introduced.

SOURCE

National Park Service (NPS). "National Register Bulletin, Guidelines for Local Surveys, A Basis for Preservation Planning." accessed November 13, 2012. http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb24/intro.htm

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1 A SHORT HISTORY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE UNITED STATES

OBJECTIVES

- Introduce the field of historic preservation.
- Outline a number of fundamental terms used in preservation.
- Describe the development of historic preservation in the United States from the preservation of Independence Hall in 1816 to the plethora of private and public efforts that make up the preservation movement today.
- Outline how this unique history has affected and continues to influence the design fields, particularly architecture and interior design.
- Introduce a number of key governmental and private preservation initiatives.

The field of historic preservation in the United States began with the efforts of a small number of private individuals in the 1800s working to save historic sites associated with elite individuals. Despite its limited beginnings, the field grew in the 20th century to involve governments, nonprofits, and a wide range of activists working to preserve thousands of historic sites, districts, and entire landscapes. In recent decades, the scope of the field broadened further to include a more diverse range of historic resources, including many associated with common people.

KEY PRESERVATION TERMS

A number of important terms that define distinct types of historic resources are critical to understanding the preservation field. One of these terms is "historic property." The National Park Service (NPS), the federal governmental agency that oversees many of the historic preservation activities in the United States, defines a **historic property** as "any building, structure, site, object, or district that has historical, architectural, archeological, or cultural significance." The specific factors used to determine which properties have historical significance are discussed in Chapter 4. The NPS has the following definitions for types of historic properties:

- **Building:** A *building* is a relatively permanent construction built to shelter any type of human activity, such as living, selling goods, or producing goods. Buildings include houses, barns, churches, factories, and office blocks and other types of shelters that are designed to be fixed to one location (although buildings are sometimes moved) and are usually made of heavy materials such as wood, brick, metal, stone, or concrete.

- **Structure:** In historic preservation, the term *structure* refers to any durable man-made construction designed to occupy a particular location that does not shelter human activity or at least was not designed to do so. Examples include bridges, most monuments, radio transmission towers, tombs, tunnels, and retaining or garden walls: any large-scale piece of human-built engineering that was not designed to move or be moved, so long as its purpose was not to shelter or house humans.

- **Object:** *Objects* are different from buildings and structures. Objects are often artistic in nature and usually relatively small in scale compared to buildings and are constructed in a simple manner. Although an object may be movable, it is normally associated with a specific setting or environment, such as statuary placed in a designed landscape; although a historic ship, which was obviously designed to move, would be considered an object in NPS preservation terminology.

- **Historic site:** *Historic site* refers to the physical location where a historically significant event took place; where a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity happened; or where buildings, structures or objects, whether intact, in ruins, or no longer evident, stand or stood. The land or site itself possesses historical, cultural, or archeological value regardless of the historical value of any construction that may exist there.

- **Historic district:** A *historic district* is a defined geographical area made up of a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are united historically or stylistically by events, design, function, or physical development (National Park Service 2012). Preservationists create historic districts by surveying an area of a settlement, town, or city, determining which buildings within the area are historic or "contributing" and which are not, and then defining and outlining the district based on these data. The historic resources located in a district normally constitute the majority of all of the buildings and structures to be found within the designated boundaries of the district.

Even though many different types and ages of buildings and structures may exist in a single historic district, they usually have some unifying factor related to common themes in their development over time. For example, the historic buildings and structures in a historic district may be linked by a common thread of history, such as the development of a local railroad hub or a single planned subdivision, or they might be linked by having a majority of buildings in a particular style, such as a district of 1920s bungalows or one of 1950s ranch houses.

In the United States, historic districts come in two basic varieties: those listed on the National Register and those created by local authorities, although some districts share both designations.

Similarly designated historic neighborhoods are known as *conservation areas* in England and in many other English-speaking countries.

EARLY PRESERVATION EFFORTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Private citizens began the field of historic preservation in the United States in the early 19th century. Most of the places these early preservationists worked to protect were associated with so-called "great white men": presidents, senators, planters, top generals, and the like. The majority had historical significance at the national level. The first of these sites was Independence Hall.

INDEPENDENCE HALL

The story of Independence Hall—then known as the Old State House—in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, illustrates the almost complete lack of a preservation ethic in the early 19th century (Figure 1.1). The building was nearly destroyed in 1813, only two generations after the American Revolution, because the government of Pennsylvania, which had moved its capital from Philadelphia to Harrisburg by this time, viewed the building and its grounds as little more than surplus property. At the time, the Pennsylvania state legislature proposed demolishing the building and selling the property off as building lots (Hosmer 1965).

In what may be the first public appeal for historic preservation in American history, the Philadelphia city council opposed the proposed demolition stating, "The spot which the bill proposes to cover with private buildings is hallowed . . . by many strong and impressive public

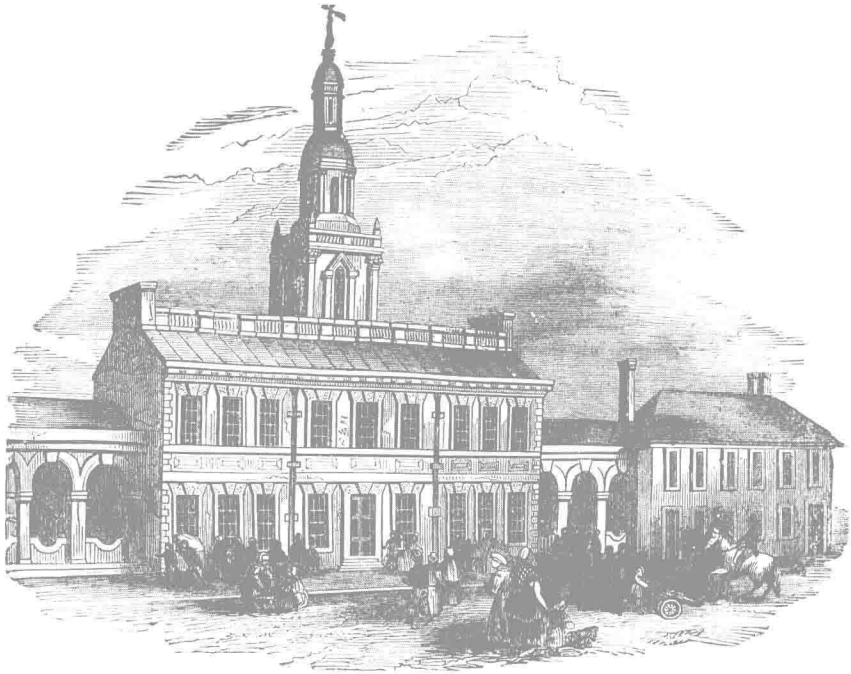

Figure 1.1 Historic image of Independence Hall in the 1700s with its original tower and wings. Source: U.S. History Images, http://ushistoryimages.com.

acts . . . which embraced the whole United States and has given birth to the only free republic the world has seen. . . ." Despite the building's tremendous historical significance, the city council felt it necessary to go even further and advance the notion that preserving the open space around the building would help keep air moving near the city center, which they claimed might protect the city from outbreaks of yellow fever. Fortunately for the building, the state senate voted to postpone selling the land in 1813. In 1816, in the midst of another attempt to demolish the building, a number of early historical associations appealed to the city of Philadelphia, which responded by purchasing the property from the state with the intention of preserving it (Mires 2002). Although Independence Hall was saved, both of its original wings were demolished to make room for new "fireproof" buildings to be designed by architect John Mills, and the irreplaceable woodwork in the room in which the Declaration of Independence was signed had been torn out (Figure 1.2) (Hosmer 1965).

The fact that a building as historically significant as Independence Hall was threatened with demolition in the first place shows how the cultural, educational, and aesthetic value of historic sites had not yet been established except in the minds of a small number of visionaries. Despite this, after 1824 additional people became interested in the building and began to replace some of its lost features, including the tower, which had been removed shortly after the American Revolution. Architect William Strickland designed a reasonably accurate reconstruction of the tower in 1828, creating one of the earliest historic reconstructions in America.

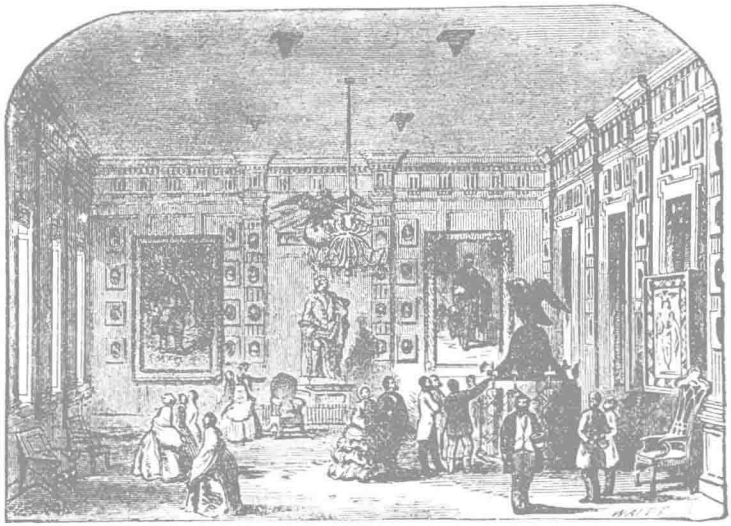

Figure 1.2 Interior of Independence Hall in the 1870s. Source: U.S. History Images, http://ushistoryimages.com.

HASBROUCK HOUSE

Aside from a few isolated private efforts, such as the preservation of the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, by Abraham Touro in 1822, it would be 34 years until another significant American historic site was deliberately preserved (Hosmer 1965). The Hasbrouck House, built in 1750 (Figure 1.3), was the first historic site to be preserved with the support of a state government. This relatively humble stone house functioned as George Washington's military headquarters in Newburgh, New York, from April 1, 1782, until August 19, 1783. The state of New York purchased the building and a few acres of surrounding land in 1850 for the purposes

Figure 1.3. The Hasbrouck House built in 1750 in Newburgh, New York, was the first historic site to be preserved with government support. Source: Photograph by Peter B. Dedek, 2010.

of preserving the site, and today, the property continues to function as a state-owned historic site. This modest example of preservation by the state of New York set an early precedent for the creation of many state-owned historic sites across the nation. Like most other early historic sites, the house was associated with a member of the elite and had national significance.

MOUNT VERNON

The effort to save Mount Vernon, the ancestral home of George Washington, was probably the most significant exception to the usual disregard of American historic sites during the 19th century.

MOUNT VERNON

In the early 1850s, Ann Pamela Cunningham from South Carolina became interested in George Washington's home at Mount Vernon after her mother wrote in a letter that the house was in danger due to neglect and someone ought to save it (Figure 1A). Because of spinal injuries received in a horse accident at age seventeen, Cunningham had spent twenty years "confined to her couch," relegated to the sidelines of plantation society, and welcomed the opportunity to pursue a cause. She founded the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union in 1854 to preserve the Georgian-style plantation house in Virginia, built in 1741.

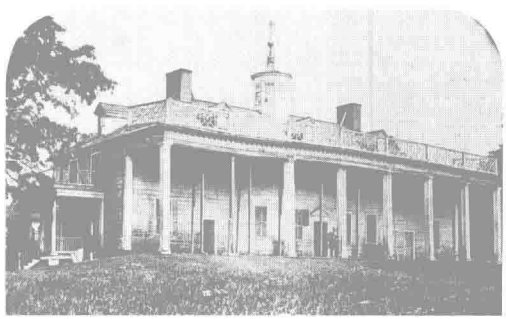

Figure 1A Mount Vernon in disrepair c. 1855. Source: Clements Library, University of Michigan.

As with many women whose abilities and talents were unrecognized and underutilized during the 1800s, once given the opportunity, Ann Pamela Cunningham proved to be very competent. She organized members and garnered resources from all parts of the United States to save Mount Vernon. Part of her motivation for saving the mansion was to help rally the nation around Washington's memory in an attempt to repair the growing sectarian rift between North and South in the run up to the Civil War (Mount Vernon Backgrounders 2006). She also wanted to memorialize George Washington and his contributions during the founding of the United States as commander of the rebel forces and as the first American president.

Initially, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association tried to interest the federal government and the state of Virginia in buying the property, but neither showed interest. Not deterred, Cunningham decided to raise the money herself and buy the house with private funds. With the help of influential friends and associates, such as Edward Everett of Boston, a nationally famous orator, she raised the money needed make an offer to buy the

estate from John Augustine Washington III, a relative of George Washington, who refused to sell. However, after Cunningham met with Washington's wife, he agreed to sell the house for $200,000 (about $5,500,000 in 2012 dollars) (Inflation Calculator 2013) partly on credit, which the Mount Vernon Ladies Association paid in full within the next few years (Mount Vernon Backgrounders 2006), after restoring the property and opening it to the public (Figure 1B).

Figure 1B Mount Vernon House, restored. Source: Photograph by Peter B. Dedek, 2012.

Cunningham's solution, the use of private money for her preservation project rather than relying on the government, set a precedent that would continue in American preservation efforts throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Historic preservation remained mostly a pursuit of the well-heeled far into the 20th century. In addition, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association laid the foundations for how restoration was to be performed in America. The association meticulously preserved, restored, and interpreted the house and its surroundings to a specific period in history: the end of the 18th century, the last few years George Washington lived there before his death. They recreated that period throughout much of the property, including interiors and outbuildings. The effort succeeded, and the site was conserved and restored and became a precedent for other early preservation projects. The practice of restoring historic properties to interpret a specific time period using as much historical documentation as possible continued for many decades and is still practiced today in some places.

EARLY FEDERAL EFFORTS

The federal government did little to support the historic built environment in the 19th century. However, it became the first government in the world to act significantly to preserve natural areas when it established the world's first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872. The creation of Yellowstone and subsequent national parks established the precedent for later efforts on the part of the federal government to protect not just natural areas, but sites significant to history and prehistory as well.

As easterners visited and settled the American Southwest in greater numbers, the ruins of graves and pueblos built by the Anasazi, ancient Native Americans who occupied areas of the Southwest well before European settlement, came under increasing threat from looters. Enthusiast organizations, such as the Archeological Institute of America and the Colorado Cliff Dwellers Association, began protesting against the destruction of sites like Casa Grande, ruins

Figure 1.4 Casa Grande Ruins. Source: The National Park Service.

of an ancient Native American settlement, to the government (Figure 1.4) (Special Committee on Historic Preservation 1966). In one of the first federal historic preservation efforts, in 1889 the United States Congress allocated $2,000 (about $50,000 in 2012 dollars) to protect the Casa Grande ruin in Arizona from destruction due to rampant commercial pot hunting (Inflation Calculator 2013).

In that same year, following Ann Pamela Cunningham's example, the Ladies Hermitage Association convinced the state of Tennessee to deed the Hermitage, the home of President Andrew Jackson, built around 1820 near Nashville, to their organization for purposes of preservation (Hermitage 2012). Eighteen years later in 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt visited the site and convinced Congress to provide funds to have a water system installed and to make repairs to the house in one of only a few early federal appropriations to preserve a historic site (Bucy 2009).

Another federal preservation effort began in 1890, when the government designated Chickamauga Battlefield in Georgia as the first national military park in an effort to memorialize the Civil War. Soon thereafter, the Gettysburg and Shiloh Battlefields were so designated, creating a new type of federally owned and designated historic site. The battlefields were eventually transferred to the National Park Service after it was established in 1916.

PRESERVATION IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

The field of historic preservation developed and reached maturity in the 20th century. Preservation standards were developing in Europe as well; for example, the United Kingdom passed its first preservation law, the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, in 1882. The act initially protected just 50 monuments in all of Great Britain, but the British Parliament passed more

comprehensive preservation laws in 1900 and again in 1910. In the century's early decades, the foundations of both the private and the public institutions of preservation in many parts of Europe and North America were established.

THE ANTIQUITIES ACT OF 1906

In 1906, the federal government took its first significant step toward playing a meaningful role in historic preservation. In response to public pressure over the looting of historic Native American graves and other sites in the West, Congress passed the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Antiquities Act allowed the president to set aside Native American ruins and other places "of historical or scientific interest" located on federal lands to protect them from looting and other kinds of destruction (Rothman 1989). These new reserves were called *national monuments.* Many early national monuments have since evolved into national parks. The national monument program formed the backbone of direct federal protection of historic and natural sites. The act also made it illegal for unauthorized people to excavate or rob archeological sites located on federal land and levied a fine on violators.

As it turned out, the 1906 act did little to deter looting, but it *did* initiate a long-standing federal trend in preservation of mostly focusing on the government's own activities and concentrating on historic resources located on federal land, rather than attempting to regulate the treatment of historic properties in private hands. To this day, with the notable exception of the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program discussed later in this chapter, federal preservation laws usually govern only the activities of federal agencies, and concern projects directly controlled or funded by the federal government.

The Antiquities Act was a product of the Progressive era, which emphasized the regulation and "wise use" of resources overseen by academically trained experts and bureaucrats with the idea that when properly managed, natural and cultural resources would not be wastefully destroyed or uselessly squandered by unbridled economic exploitation and could therefore be studied by scientists and enjoyed by the public.

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES

With the exception of the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, between 1906 and the Great Depression, historic preservation changed little at the federal level. However, during the 1910s and 1920s, private preservation efforts increased in frequency and scale. In 1910, William Sumner Appleton founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities with the mission of preserving the "most interesting" historic buildings in New England (Cooke 1987). In 1941, Appleton described his reasons for founding the Society:

> When the writer was a boy it was possible for the visitor to Boston to wander around the older streets of the city and to have pointed out some fifty interesting old structures, all of them worthy of interest because of their architectural excellence, extreme old age, or connection to some event of historical significance. This list of fifty, within the author's memory has dwindled down to about ten . . . (Appleton 1941).

In this quote, Appleton cites three reasons to preserve a historic property: architectural excellence, old age, and connection to significant historical events. These justifications resemble the criteria for evaluation of historic properties developed by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places in the early 1970s (see Chapter 4). Today, these same criteria are used across the nation to determine which buildings and sites should be considered historic. Since 1910, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities—now called Historic New England—has purchased and operated a number of house museums, collected more than 100,000 historic objects, created and managed a large historical archive, and provided preservation services to assist New Englanders in preservation projects (Historic New England 2010).

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

William Sumner Appleton was part of a growing trend in private preservation efforts. In 1923 the Reverend Doctor W.A.R. Goodwin began a campaign to restore the entire city center of Williamsburg, Virginia, the former colonial capital of Virginia. In that year, he became acquainted with John D. Rockefeller at a meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Society in New York City and proposed that Rockefeller finance a Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall for Williamsburg's College of William and Mary. Soon after, Rockefeller toured Williamsburg with Goodwin and agreed to underwrite much of the restoration of the entire historic city. The idea was to create an open air historical museum based on European precedents such as Skansen, a living outdoor museum created in 1891 in Stockholm, Sweden, dedicated to showing visitors how Swedes lived and worked before industrialization.

Work at Williamsburg began in 1926 to take the city "back" to its colonial appearance, with many of the buildings carefully documented and some, such as the Wren Building (1695; Figure 1.5), restored by architect William Graves Perry. In the course of the heavy-handed citywide

Figure 1.5 Wren Building. Source: Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.