

This syllabus courtesy of the

Vernacular Architecture Forum Syllabus Exchange



A collaborative project of the Vernacular Architecture Forum
www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi.html

instructor: Gail Lee Dubrow
course title: Preservation and the Vernacular Environment
institution: University of Washington
date: Winter, 2001

posted date: June, 2008
stable URL: www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi/dubrow1.pdf

This document is provided for non-commercial, informational purposes only.

Gail Lee Dubrow
Associate Professor of Architecture, Urban Design and Planning
College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Washington
Wednesdays 9-11:20am Gould 117 (with access to Gould 402)

URBDP 587

PRESERVATION AND THE VERNACULAR ENVIRONMENT

Winter 2001

Course Description:

Urban planners and designers, architects, landscape architects, and government officials increasingly are being asked to assess the relative merits of saving ordinary features of the urban landscape such as commercial blocks, strips and buildings, warehouses and sheds, wharves and piers, and abandoned streetcar tracks and railroad spurs. Yet the past emphasis that preservationists placed on saving only the most significant architect-designed buildings, and protecting only those places associated with notable individuals or mainstream events in American history, have left many environmental design professionals without a coherent intellectual framework for making important decisions about the preservation of vernacular elements of the cultural landscape and historic built environment.

This seminar will explore the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of preserving the vernacular environment. While we will familiarize ourselves with the existing literature in the field, which has tended to focus on vernacular architecture in non-urban environments, the seminar will raise new questions about its implications for urban architecture, cultural landscapes, and places that have unexplored significance for interpreting the historical development of the city and region.

The subject will be approached through a combination of readings, discussion, and research. In a term project, students will have the opportunity to focus their research on documenting the historical significance, physical character, current condition, and future possibilities for preserving an element of the vernacular environment that holds particular interest for them.

This course is recommended for students in the College of Architecture and Urban Planning who have a special interest in urban history and historic preservation. It is a required course for Track II of the Preservation Planning and Design Certificate Program.

Course Requirements:

In keeping with the orientation of this course toward discussing common readings, and conducting independent research projects, there are several requirements beyond the obvious ones of preparation for, attendance at, and participation in seminar.

First, seminar members will be required to lead discussions based on the assigned readings on several occasions during the quarter. Second, there will be occasional assignments designed to strengthen students' ability to identify, describe, and document vernacular architecture and elements of the cultural landscape. Third, each student will be required to write a 10 page original research paper on some aspect of the vernacular environment.

A wide range of topics are possible; however, the specific topic is subject to the instructor's approval. A preliminary research proposal (two pages plus bibliography) is due in class on Wednesday January 24th, at which time students will also make brief (10 minute) presentations of their proposed projects. Time will be set aside during the last class session, Wednesday March 7th, for each student to make a ten minute presentation, illustrated by slides, summarizing findings from the research project. Completed student papers are due by Wednesday March 14th at 5pm in 410 Gould Hall.

Grading

Attendance (no more than one absence) 10%

Participation 10%

Presentations

1. Readings 10%

2. Research Proposal 10%

3. Final Presentation 10%

Research Paper 50%

Total 100%

Required Readings Available for Purchase:

Carter, Thomas, ed. **Images of an American Land: Vernacular Architecture in the Western United States** (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

Cromley, Elizabeth and Carter L. Hudgins, eds. **Gender, Class and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture** (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995) Volume V.

Dubrow, Gail and Neile Graham, eds. **Preservation of the Vernacular Environment I and II** (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Preservation Planning and Design Program. Volumes I and II of the Working Papers Series). (Distribution to be arranged)

Glassie, Henry. **Folk Housing in Middle Virginia** (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975).

Groth, Paul and Todd Bressi, eds. **Understanding Ordinary Landscapes** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Hayden, Dolores. **The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History** (Cambridge: MIT Press,

1996).

Lowenthal, David. **The Past is a Foreign Country** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Lynch, Kevin. **What Time is this Place?** (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972).

Stilgoe, John R. **Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

Upton, Dell. **America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America** (New York: John Wiley, 1995). (Back ordered -- See library copy)

Upton, Dell and John Michael Vlach, eds. **Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture** (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

Vlach, John Michael. **Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Required Readings Only Available on Reserve in the Architecture Library:

Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture (complete set)

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin No. 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin No. 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992.

Upton, Dell, ed.. **America's Architectural Roots: The Ethnic Groups that Built America.** Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Weds. Jan 3 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Purpose: An introduction to research on the vernacular environment and to related preservation issues. Examples from Professor Dubrow's research on the built environment and landscapes associated with Los Angeles' multicultural heritage, women's history landmarks, work on Seattle's waterfront and Asian Pacific American heritage illustrate a variety of issues in the field.

Readings:

Syllabus (Handout)

"Introduction," in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., **Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture**, pp. xiii-xxiv.

Camille Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today," in Camille Wells, ed., **Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II**, pp. 1-10 (Library)

2. Jan 10 RECENT ISSUES IN PRESERVING THE VERNACULAR ENVIRONMENT: CASE STUDIES FROM SEATTLE AND VICINITY

Purpose: To become familiar through local case studies with a wide range of issues that attend efforts to preserve vernacular elements of the built environment and cultural landscape.

Readings:

Gail Dubrow and Alexa Berlow, "Vernacular and Popular Architecture in Seattle," in Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, ed., **Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects** (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), pp. 282-288 and 311-312 (Library)

Assignment: Identify an example of a vernacular building or landscape in Seattle that has not been described in the assigned readings and briefly document it. Identify the following features: location, designer or builder, building or landscape type, materials, method of construction, form, function, current condition, and why you consider it to be a good example of a vernacular property. Bring photographic documentation in the form of slides, and make a brief (10 min.) presentation on your case study.

3. Jan 17 VERNACULAR BUILDING TYPES

Purpose: In this session, we will explore the origins and development of typological research in vernacular architecture, beginning with the efforts of cultural geographer Fred Kniffen to discern "culturogeographic regions." We will consider the relationship of Kniffen's efforts to classify and map the distribution of vernacular building types and the subsequent attempt of Henry Glassie to discern the unwritten principles that govern the design of vernacular buildings. Finally, we will examine recent critiques of the established vernacular classification systems (and the research methods associated with them), and explore some alternative approaches to understanding vernacular building patterns.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

Fred Kniffen, "Louisiana House Types," **Annals of the AAG** 26:4 (December 1936): 179-193 (Library)

Fred Kniffen, "Folk Housing: A Key to Diffusion," in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., **Common Places**, pp. 3-26.

Henry Glassie, **Folk Housing in Middle Virginia** (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975).

Michael Stinitz, "Rethinking Geographical Approaches to the Common House: Evidence from 18th Century Massachusetts," in Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman, eds., **Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture III** (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), pp. 16-26 (Library)

Barbara Wyatt, "The Challenge of Addressing Vernacular Architecture in a State Historic Preservation Survey Program," in Camille Wells, ed., **Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II**, pp. 37-43. (Library)

4. Jan 24 REVIEW OF STUDENT RESEARCH PROPOSALS

**** RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS**

Purpose: To become familiar with research on the vernacular environment in the western United States, including work completed by students in the College of Architecture and Urban Planning in past years, to review student proposals for original research on selected aspects of the vernacular environment, and to identify a range of appropriate research methods.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

Gail Dubrow and Neile Graham, eds., **Preservation of the Vernacular Environment I and II** (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Preservation Planning and Design Program. Volumes I and II of the Working Papers Series) (Distribution to be arranged)

Thomas Carter, ed., **Images of an American Land: Vernacular Architecture in the Western United States** (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin 39: Researching a Historic Property**. Washington, D.C., 1991. (Library)

5. Jan 31 STUDYING THE VERNACULAR BUILT ENVIRONMENT: APPROACHES AND METHODS

Purpose: To sample research in the history of the vernacular environment to identify important intellectual issues, sources, and methods relevant to our own proposed research projects.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

In Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., **Common Places**:

Clay Lancaster, "The American Bungalow," pp. 79-106

Edward T. Price, "The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat," pp. 124-148.

Robert Blair St. George, "'Set Thine Own House in Order': The Domestication of Yeomanry in Seventeenth-Century New England," pp. 336-364.

In Camille Wells, ed., **Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II**: (Library)

Dell Upton, "Anglican Parish Churches in Eighteenth Century Virginia," pp. 90-101

Paul Groth, "'Marketplace' Vernacular Design: The Case of Downtown Rooming Houses," pp. 179-191.

6. Weds. Feb 7 VERNACULAR LANDSCAPES

Purpose: To explore the interaction of natural and human imprints on the vernacular landscape, as well as the challenges posed by contemporary efforts to include these types of properties in historic preservation programs.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

John R. Stilgoe, **Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

Paul Groth and Todd Bressi, editors. **Understanding Ordinary Landscapes** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin No. 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes**. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d. (Library)

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin No. 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties**. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992. (Library)

7. Feb. 14 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS

Purpose: Recent directions in historical scholarship have replaced the past emphasis on notable individuals, and military and diplomatic history, with a concern for how the majority of people lived. The harmonious image of American society and culture that was generated by the past preoccupations of consensus historians have been supplanted by a new focus on contested social relations of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The purpose of this session is to explore the possibilities for linking the concerns, approaches and methods characteristic of social history to the interpretation of the vernacular environment; and to examine its implications for research in the field.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

In Dell Upton and Michael Vlach, ed., **Common Places**:

Kenneth L. Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," pp. 240-260.

Lizabeth Cohen, "Embellishing a Life of Labor: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working Class Homes, 1885-1915," pp. 261-280.

Fraser D. Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building," pp. 292-314.

Selections from Elizabeth Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, eds. **Gender, Class and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture** (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995) Volume V.

8. Feb. 21 PRESERVING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE VERNACULAR ENVIRONMENT

Purpose: While the issue of ethnicity has been a long-standing preoccupation for scholars of vernacular architecture and the cultural landscape, past work has tended to focus on white, European traditions. Only recently have preservation agencies begun to identify, interpret, and preserve the cultural resources associated with African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, and other groups that will soon constitute the population majority in many US cities. So too, past archaeological approaches to the study of Native American resources are giving way to a more dynamic view that recognizes the continuity of Native

American presence on the continent. The emerging literature on the preservation of Native American, African American, and Asian Pacific American cultural resources provides a useful point of departure for a session focusing on the possibilities for preserving cultural diversity in the vernacular environment.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

Dell Upton, ed., **America's Architectural Roots**. (Library)

Antoinette Lee, "Discovering Old Cultures in the New World: The Role of Ethnicity," in Robert Stipe and Antoinette Lee, eds., **The American Mosaic** (Washington, DC: US/ICOMOS, 1987), pp. 180-205. (Library)

John Michael Vlach, **Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Gail Dubrow, "Introduction: Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation: Recent Developments in Scholarship and Public Historical Practice," in **Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming). (Library)

Gail Dubrow, "'The Nail That Sticks Up Gets Hit:' The Architecture of Japanese American Identity, Parts I and II." Currently under review for publication in *the Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* and *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture X* (Library)

9. Feb. 28 THE PURPOSE AND MEANING OF PRESERVING THE VERNACULAR ENVIRONMENT: A CRITICAL REASSESSMENT

Purpose: This sessions will provide opportunities for critical reflection on the past purposes and future meanings of historic preservation planning. We will consider the changes that might be required to fully integrate the vernacular, as well as places significant in social, ethnic, and women's history, into historic preservation programs. Finally, we will address the possibilities for creating a new and more inclusive constituency for preservation planning.

Discussion Leaders: _____

Readings:

Kevin Lynch, **What Time is this Place?** (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972).

David Lowenthal, **The Past is a Foreign Country** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Dolores Hayden, **The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History** (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

10. Weds. March 7 FINAL PRESENTATIONS OF STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS Last class session

Weds. March 14 FINAL PROJECTS DUE (5pm in 410 Gould Hall)