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instructor: Louis P. Nelson
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ARH 555: Field Methods in Historic Preservation

Spring 2006

Louis P. Nelson

Tuesdays 12:30 to 3:15

Office Hours: Wednesday, 1 to 3, Campbell 137

Course Description:

Focusing not on monumental or public architecture but instead vernacular landscapes, “Field Methods in Historic Preservation” introduces students to the essential field techniques of building analysis and recordation. Through a series of lectures, the instructor will first introduce the students to traditional materials and technologies. The students will also be introduced to the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) conventions used in the process of recording a historic building through measured drawings. In the field, students will be introduced to the methods of “reading” a building, i.e. correctly interpreting its various historical layers through an assessment of materials, technologies, and stylistic clues. The students will also be introduced to the basic conventions used in the process of recording a historic building through measured drawings. As a field-based course, some of our class time will be spent in the field examining, measuring, and recording buildings. Students will be expected to apply those assessment and recording techniques that are central to the class to a building on their own. This class will introduce students to a variety of field-based skills central to both the study of vernacular architecture and the practice of historic preservation. These skills are useful to any architect interested in working with the historic built environment, any preservationist, and any architectural historian interested in working with vernacular architecture or engaging in a rigorous assessment of the material qualities of American architecture.

Field Recording in Falmouth, Jamaica:

Offered in addition or in place of this course, Professor Nelson will direct this summer a field school dedicated to recording historic structures in the early nineteenth-century port town of Falmouth, Jamaica. Working together with the Caribbean Institute of Historic preservation and Training and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, students from the University of Virginia will spend their break recording historic structures alongside Jamaican students in an effort to record and preserve this important early nineteenth-century townscape still buried under 20th century accretions.

Requirements:

The students will complete two major requirements. The first, driven by the class lectures, is an essay examination of the student’s command of the knowledge base of traditional materials and technologies, information essential to reading and recording a building in the field. The second, more significant requirement is a building-centered project. Focusing on a threatened historic building in the Charlottesville-Albemarle environs, students working in teams will generate exacting measured drawings of the building and a substantial assessment of their building’s materials, technologies, and change over time.

Requirements:

In-Class Exam:	25%
Class Participation	25%
Pin-up Field Drawings	25%
Final Drawing	25%

Primary Texts:

Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes* (University of Tennessee, 2005)

John A. Burns, *Recording Historic Structures*, 2nd edition (John Wiley and Sons, 2004)

W. Brown Morton III, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, (Washington DC, reprinted 1997)

Texts on reserve:

Martin Weaver, *Conserving Buildings: A Guide to Techniques and Materials*, (John Wiley, 1993)

W. Brown Morton, III, et. al. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (National Park Service, 1992)

Architectural Graphic Standards (AIA, 1981)

Harley McKee, *An Introduction to Early American Masonry, Stone, Brick, Mortar, and Plaster* (Preservation Press, 1973)

Mark London, *Masonry: How to Care for Old and Historic Brick and Stone* (Preservation Press, 1988)

Thomas Jester, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: history and conservation* (McGraw Hill, 1995)

Brooke Hindle, *Material Culture of the Wooden Age* (Sleepy Hollow, 1981)

Pamela, Simpson, *Cheap, quick, & easy: imitative architectural materials, 1870-1930* (Tennessee, 1999), skim

Thomas Jester, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* (McGraw Hill, 1995), skim

People, Power, Places: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VIII (Tennessee, 2000)

Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes* (University of Tennessee, 2005)

John A. Burns, *Recording Historic Structures*, 2nd edition (John Wiley and Sons, 2004)

W. Brown Morton III, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, (Washington DC, reprinted 1997)

Outline of the Semester Project

Subject: The subject of the semester project is the recording and assessment of an historic building. The recording project will include the following components: 1) a written description and “reading” of the building’s material fabric; 2) a carefully selected collection of photographs that record the essential aspects of the building; 3) and one sheet of measured drawings produced according to the standards set by the Historic American Building Survey.

Since agricultural complexes usually offer numerous smaller buildings on a single site, I recommend that students work in teams by site, but that each student is responsible for recording either an individual building or the site plan. Each team **MUST** produce three copies of the final project: one for Kimball Library, one for the professor, and one for the property owner.

The final project for each site will have these components:

Cover Page: Identifies the site, lists and buildings recorded, the students’ responsible for each building, and the date of completion.

Introduction: a one-page introduction to the building including a cursory description of the site and its buildings and a *very* brief history of the complex as revealed through the student assessment of the buildings. This is also the appropriate place to thank the property owner for allowing you to complete this project.

The final project will include the following components for EACH building on the site:

1) Architectural Description and Building Assessment: This essay is broken into two halves. The first, the architectural description, should always begin big and work toward the details. Begin by describing the major masses of the building. Then move to the exteriors of the building, commenting on both design features and technological factors. Then walk the reader through the *entire* building in a logical sequence. Clarity of organization is essential in writing a successful architectural description. Use correct architectural terminology. An excellent guide is Carl Lounsbury’s, *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (Oxford, 1994). Be sure to have someone who has never been to the site attempt to recreate the building from your description. The second component is a recreation of the building’s history as indicated by the surviving fabric. The author should indicate which parts of the building are Period 1, Period 2, etc, discussing physical evidence for their conclusions. This portion of the essay should address the various ways that earlier building periods have been altered. Obviously, it is critical that this essay be linked to the drawings and photographs. The written assessment produced by the student recording the site plan will obviously differ from these. That student will need to describe the entire site with discussions of how the entire site changed over time. In doing so, they will need to establish the periodization for the entire site. They will obviously not need to discuss interiors.

Photographs: The preferred method for incorporating photographs is digital. Digital imagery allows the students to print black and white images here in the A School and will insure the quality of images in the final report. Students can check out a digital camera from Dick Smith. Photographs should include at *least* three exterior images, and three interior images and should illustrate critical points/discoveries analyzed in the description. Each image should be numbered (i.e., Fig. 1), labeled with the building name, the view, and a short narrative of the important features captured by the photograph. Students writing the site description will need to include contextual images that help to relate the buildings to one another.

Measured Drawings: Each student is expected to produce at least one full sheet of measured drawings, completed to HABS standards. Since agricultural buildings tend to be small, it is assumed that a student can probably fit two or three drawings of the building on a single sheet. Each set of drawings should include a floor plan. Additional drawings can include additional floor plans; floor, wall, or roof framing plans; sections; elevations, details, etc. Each finished drawing—ink on mylar—must depend on accurate field measurements. The student should select the drawings to best illustrate the critical components of the building and to accord with the written description. Drawings are to include a scale, title block, and a north arrow. Finished drawings are to be produced at ¼” or ¾” scale on mylar; reduced (8½” by 11”) copies are to be included in the final report.

The projects are due in the following phases:

Phase I: By March 25, you will have completed the field recording of your building. Students will pin up their field drawings—pencil on gridded paper—and a selection of their field photography in an exhibition room together with a draft of their description and assessment for review by the professor and the class.

Phase II: This is the due date for the entire project. The student’s sheet of drawings—ink on mylar finished according to HABS standards—will be completed and turned in together with the written description and photographs.

Semester Schedule:

Jan 24: Introduction

Jan 31: Timber Framing and Dendrochronology

Dell Upton, “Traditional Timber Framing,” in *Material Culture of the Wooden Age*

Fred Peterson, “Anglo-American Wooden Frame Farmhouses in the Midwest, 1830-1900: Origins of Balloon Frame Construction” in *People, Power, Places: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VIII* (Tennessee, 2000), 3-16

- Herman J. Heikkinen "The Key-Year Dendrochronology Technique and its Application in Dating Historic Structures in Maryland," *APT Bulletin* (15, no., 3 (1983): 3-25.
- W. Brown Morton III, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, (Washington DC, 1992), 10-16
- Martin Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, skim chapter 4

Feb 7: Brick and Stone Masonry, Concrete

- W. Brown Morton, III, et. al. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, pgs 1-8
- Harley McKee, *An Introduction to Early American Masonry, Stone, Brick, Mortar, and Plaster* (Preservation Press, 1973), skim
- Howard Newlon, "The Evolution of Concrete Structures" BSCE Lecture Series, 1979
- Martin Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, skim chapters 5 through 8
- Mark London, *Masonry: How to Care for Old and Historic Brick and Stone* (Preservation Press, 1988), skim
- Pamela, Simpson, *Cheap, quick, & easy: imitative architectural materials, 1870-1930* (Tennessee, 1999), skim
- Thomas Jester, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* (McGraw Hill, 1995), skim

Feb 14: Recording Historic Structures: Field Measuring

- John A. Burns, *Recording Historic Structures* (AIA for HABS, 2004), 1-51, 88-157
- The Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture*, Vol 1, "Recording and Documentation," 56-58
- Gabrielle Lanier and Bernard Herman, *Everyday Architecture in the Mid-Atlantic: Looking at Buildings and Landscapes* (Johns Hopkins, 1997), "Introduction" 1-9; and "Recording Historic Buildings" 316-341.
- Allen Noble, "Measuring Vernacular Buildings: A Field Course Unit" *Material Culture* 23 no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-14.
- Carter, Thomas and Elizabeth Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: Q Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and landscapes*, 1-82.

Saturday, February 18: Field Trip to Recordation Site

Feb 21: Metals: Nails, Iron, and Steel

- Lee Nelson, "Nail Chronology as an aid to dating old buildings," *Technical Leaflet* 48 (National Park Service)
- Martin Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, skim chapter 9
- W. Brown Morton, III, et. al. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, pgs 18-28, 48-52

Feb 28: Finishes and Ornament: moldings, paints, decorative metal...

Susan Buck "Why Paint Analysis?" *Vernacular Architecture Newsletter* 76
(Summer 1998)

Martin Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, read chapter 10

W. Brown Morton, III, et. al. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, pgs 30-46, 54-60

March 7: Spring Break

March 14: NO CLASS

Mar 21: Class Trip to Montpelier with Mark Wenger

March 28: In-Class Essay Exam

April 4: Pin-Up of Field Drawings

- **Phase II of Project Due in class**
- Class will meet in Exhibition Room ?

April 11: Recording Historic Structures: Graphic Techniques and Photography

- John A. Burns, *Recording Historic Structures* (AIA for HABS, 2004), 1-51, 88-157

April 18: On-Site work

April 25: Studio Time

May 2: Studio Time/Final in-class presentations

Final projects with drawings due by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 5

Saturday field trip to Poplar Forest with Travis McDonald