

Presentation to Staff
National Trust of England, Wales & Northern Ireland
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David J. Brown, Former EVP and Chief Preservation Officer
National Trust for Historic Preservation (U.S.)
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- Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you that I recently shared with our colleagues at the International Conference of National Trusts in Bermuda.

- I've attended the International Conference of National Trusts for the past 16 years – my first being in 2003 in Edinburgh, Scotland—the 10th such gathering of the National Trusts from around the world and the one where the commitment to stay connected between conferences became a reality.

- The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the U.S. was fortunate to host the 11th International Conference in Washington in 2005, where the steering committee for what was to become INTO was formed, leading to the launch of this organization two years later in Delhi at the 12th International Conference.

- At the end of March, I stepped down as Chief Preservation Officer with the National Trust for Historic Preservation after more than 22 years with the Trust and more than four decades in the historic preservation/heritage conservation field.

- Given that move, these remarks will have a more personal touch.
- Over the past 22 years, I made it a practice to regularly remember both the legacy and the promise of the National Trust in the U.S., and I want to expand that today to include the National Trust here in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland; INTO; and the worldwide community of National Trusts.
- In the U.S., we were founded by Congressional Charter in 1949 after America's leaders had seen the destruction war could inflict not only on people, but on a nation's culture and heritage.
- You were our model, the gold standard that we sought to emulate whenever possible. Our founding chairman, David Finley, was one of the famous Monuments Men who risked their lives to save the cultural patrimony of Europe during WWII.
- Bill Murtagh, an early predecessor of mine as EVP, went on to a distinguished career in preservation as the first Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, establishing the tool our government uses to tell America's story.
- The National Trust led the fight and saved the West Front of the U.S. Capitol from a building expansion that would have been a desecration of one of the sacred spaces of our democracy.

- Great names and families from American history—John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould, Woodrow Wilson—entrusted our organization with their stories and their homes.
- And so many of our fellow National Trusts have similar giants and histories.
- When we were in Bermuda earlier this year, we recognized the pioneering work of William Zuill, a man who prized warm friendship and solidarity, and definitely understood the value of reaching out around the world to learn and share.
- Bill became the first Executive Director of the Bermuda National Trust in 1972 and made huge contributions as an author, historian and conservationist on the island. He became a good friend through INTO, and I'll always remember his focus on learning through comradeship.
- Founded in January 1895 by Sir Robert Hunter, Hardwicke Rawnsley, and the incomparable Octavia Hill, your organization — the National Trust for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland — has a story that has provided both inspiration and direction for all of us.
- Hill's intensity and greatness are still celebrated more than 100 years after her death. In addition to founding the Trust, she was one of the greatest social entrepreneurs in British history. From housing to philanthropy, arts policy to feminism, welfare reform to conservation, her legacy sustains us and is just as relevant today as it was in 1895.

- Within the first year of its founding, the National Trust had acquired both its first cultural landscape as well as its first building—providing all of us with the model that the built and natural environments are intertwined and inseparable in understanding and protecting our heritage.
- Others have expanded that model, most notably the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, which though much younger than either of our organizations, is still a leader in promoting the recognition of culture—and especially intangible heritage—as vital for human development that responds to national identity and diversity.
- In the Ugandan model, culture is defined as a constantly changing set of values, identities, traditions and aspirations that govern the way we relate as individuals, communities and nations. It is central to our well-being and to defining the ideal society we seek.
- That type of social justice focus fits—in a different time and place—with Octavia Hill’s vision for social change.
- And of course, I could name other founding fathers and mothers in our movement—from Austria to Australia, from Tanzania to Thailand, from St. Lucia to Sri Lanka, and from Italy to Ireland to Indonesia and beyond.
- We **clearly stand on the shoulders of giants** as we look ahead at the work we have to do.

- While great names and families in all our countries have entrusted our organization with their stories and their homes, others who didn't have access to wealth and power also turn to National Trusts to tell their stories and protect the places that matter to them.
- The places we choose to preserve tell us who we are as a people and as a nation and as a planet. **They tell stories.** Now every one of us has **personal stories** that help define us. Often those stories are rooted in place.
- Franklin, Tennessee, my parents' hometown, has a lively Main Street **and a downtown theatre** that figures prominently in one of my stories.
- My grandmother believed that idle hands were the devil's workshop and I'll never forget the times she told me to **"Make yourself useful as well as ornamental!"** My father heard those same words. As a teenager he went to work at the Franklin Theatre — selling tickets, making popcorn, and serving as the back-up projectionist.
- I've heard stories of that theatre all my life. My parents went there on dates. I saw films in that theatre in the 1960s, as it slowly deteriorated with the arrival of the malls.
- Fortunately, a dedicated group of people loved downtown Franklin and led a Main Street comeback. This **Great American Main Street** award-winning community is now a cultural and economic engine in Middle Tennessee.

- And my father’s **beloved Franklin Theatre** is part of that renaissance. New music stars and current films play in the same space **where his generation went to dream about a brighter future** during the darkest days of the Depression.

- Before he passed away two years ago, my father was able to attend the re-lighting of the marquee and to see the restored theatre. We “bought a seat” in his honor, so that Tom Brown’s name—a name from the theatre’s past—would be connected to its future.

- Individual and collective memories, connecting over a continuum of time, to create community and national identity.

- This is at the heart of **why we save** old places. **Why old places matter.**

- As I look to the future of preservation and conservation, two key points from this story stand out to me:
 - **First, Relevance is More Important than Ever**
 - The Franklin Theatre remains a place where entertainment, music, and stories bind us together in the 21st century, just as it did during the Great Depression and WWII.
 - **Second, for a movement that appears resistance to change, the way we save places keeps changing — and that’s a good thing.**

- The National Trust’s Main Street program in the U.S. began as a **push against both modern mall development AND traditional preservation practice**. Main Street buildings like the Franklin Theatre **weren’t the crown jewels of American architecture**—but they were places that mattered to the local community in ways that went well beyond their architectural style.

- So much of **what led to the renaissance** of downtown Franklin came from the **work of the National Trust in the U.S.** And I suspect that as you think about the personal stories that define you and the places that have been saved in your communities and countries, you will also find that programs, campaigns, and laws supported by the National Trust had a role in ensuring their protection and conservation.

- The National Trusts of the world are **well positioned to lead future change**...but we must understand how and why change is important

- **Saving the past *has* a past**—and ***that*** history is worth knowing as we look to the future. With the preservation and conservation movements adapting amid significant societal change, those who understand this past are best equipped to use conservation as an effective tool today and tomorrow.

Let’s Begin with a look at Relevance

- *New York Times* critic Herbert Muschamp said that ***“The essential feature of a landmark is not its design, but the place it holds in a city’s memory.”***
- The A.G. Gaston Motel was described in 1955 as the “most lavish Negro owned hotel in the nation,” but this Birmingham landmark was abandoned and decaying just five decades later.
- Built by **Alabama’s first African-American millionaire**, it became the **epicenter for those campaigning to break the back of segregation** in 1963. The infamous bombing and murder of four young black girls at the 16th Street Baptist Church occurred one block away.
- Well-coordinated NTHP **advocacy, public affairs** and **legal efforts** led the city to donate a portion of the motel to the Trust in 2016. We immediately transferred it to the National Park Service, which enabled President Obama to create the **Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument**.
- This is clearly a place of memory and relevance.
- What I’ve **seen over my time in the field** is that when many people think about historic preservation, their minds think only of “great architecture” or places “preserved in amber.” Unfortunately, they **often don’t connect the work to save places with giving people meaning for the present and hope for the future**.

- Why is that? Well, we haven't always connected places to the lives of real people. Perhaps our tools and our focus push us to see our **cultural heritage** as something **rare and unique** to be carefully preserved, as opposed to something **ubiquitous, ordinary, and every day** to be **celebrated**. Places like our Main Streets, a tenement building, thousands of schools for African Americans built across the American South to provide education during a period of extreme segregation, or a community landmark-turned-blues concert venue in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
- In preservation in the U.S., we reference the “**period of significance**” in considering why a property is important, and that time is always somewhere in the past.
- I pushed our staff to answer the question, “**What if the period of significance is now?**” **Why is the A.G. Gaston Motel significant in 2019?** What does that battle for equal rights in the 1960s have to do with our growing inequality and continued racial strife in the U.S. today.
- **Why is President Lincoln's Cottage**—a National Trust Historic Site where Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862—still significant today? What if it becomes a place to raise awareness about human trafficking in the 21st century? As we know all too well, slavery didn't end in 1865.
- **How about the Woodrow Wilson House, another National Trust Historic Site?** President Wilson led the U.S. into World War I and was a founder of

the League of Nations, the predecessor to the United Nations, but he also supported some of the most racist policies of the 20th century, which led African American leaders to call for a 15th point to be added to his famous 14 Points—one that addressed racial equality.

- “What if the period of significance is now” gives our work new relevance. Think about that question for the places you protect and steward for today, tomorrow, and forever.
- The **benefits of preservation** and conservation extend across many areas that we would identify as relevant—environmental sustainability, economic growth, health, and more. Our studies have shown time and again that older neighborhoods are better places in which to work, live, and play.
- **But to be relevant, historic preservationists need to understand how most people perceive and value older places and then make our case through their lens, not ours. We need to get comfortable with the emotional ways most people see their past.**
- As I said at the 2015 INTO conference in Cambridge, some of the most important work in this area is being undertaken by Dr. Jeremy Wells, a professor in the historic preservation program at the University of Maryland, where he specializes in the use of social science research methods to improve the ways in which the historic environment can be conserved.

- Dr. Wells makes the case for historic place conservation based on people's values. He describes the disconnect between the way that professionals who work with old or historic buildings, places, and landscapes...
- "...make an *objective* case for conserving historic places and the *emotional* way in which most people actually talk about places with cultural value. Each side tends to talk past each other, which may help to explain why most people support conserving old or historic places but don't view themselves as historic preservationists, and therefore fail to support organizations that advocate for historic place conservation."
- "We aren't communicating effectively with most stakeholders in their own language and its familiar meanings. We are operating as if we expect most people to adopt our language, perspective and objective descriptions," says Dr. Wells, "which is an improbable outcome."
- To be embraced, our work needs to be easy and personal. It matters to me that Nashville's Union Station—converted from a railroad station to a hotel—left the historic train schedule in place behind the main desk. It matters because my parents left Union Station aboard THE GEORGIAN on June 30, 1950, to go to Chicago for their honeymoon.
- According to Wells, laypeople believe that heritage can be found everywhere – not just in special districts – and that at heart everyone is a heritage expert. Natural and cultural heritage are intertwined in a

continuum. People have a much more multidimensional view of significance than the preservation expert would often suspect, and people understand that significance lies in the present, not the past.

The Way We Save Our Past Must Keep Changing

- Fortunately, we've proven ourselves good at change.
- Forty years ago, in the United States, **preservation was an outsider movement** with citizens working against the grain of normal policies, plans, and development practice.
- Many preservation tools were created as **exceptions and Band-Aids**, designed to give older buildings, landscapes, and neighborhoods a chance for survival in an otherwise hostile environment.
- Tens of thousands of citizens across the country rose up to fight the nature and pace of change in their neighborhoods. This instinct to **shape the communities we want, instead of accepting what others conceive for us, remains.**
- Here's a powerful example: The residents around Memphis, Tennessee's Crosstown Concourse recently came together to **push for new zoning to preserve their neighborhood's historic fabric.** "Suddenly, the impossible has happened" one resident said, "so let's figure out what's next."

- **What was impossible?** Taking a decaying 1920s former Sears distribution facility **three football fields in length**—filled with rats, standing water, and wild dogs—and turning it into a **thriving, urban vertical village**.
- One of the largest LEED-certified rehabs ever completed, the Crosstown Concourse is almost fully occupied with hundreds of residents, an arts auditorium, school, restaurants, and health-care providers.
- The National Trust Community Investment Corporation, a for-profit subsidiary of NTHP, was an investor of New Markets Tax Credits in this project. This is what **preservation can do**, when the right tools are in place.
- For while America's cities are now magnets for the young, the **challenge for the next 50 years** is taking the values and proven benefits of preservation and conservation to scale, while adapting our tools for today's environment and issues.
- While the Crosstown Concourse is an amazing success story, let me tell you about **how America's only World Heritage City** and the birthplace of our constitution—a city rich with architectural landmarks, walkable neighborhoods, and diverse ethnic communities—**faces a preservation crisis**.
- In Philadelphia, **demolition rates** are climbing while the percentage of buildings **protected through landmark designation is far lower** than the

national average. City leaders turned to the National Trust for help, and with the Mayor's Task Force we evaluated Philadelphia's preservation programs, gathered national best practices, and provided data-driven research.

- The 2018 Task Force Report is a **blueprint for preservation practice in a new urban era**—one we look forward to sharing with other cities nationwide.
- Here are just a **few of those new tools and methods**:
 - We are far behind in the use of technology, and we must leverage **open data and GIS technology** to move beyond survey exclusively focused on architectural attributes and completed by preservation professionals. Let's **find out what people in a community value** and then engage with them to save it in ways that are accessible and compelling.
 - In the U.S., we need to follow many other international models and **reconsider our one-size-fits-all** tool of classification. Buildings whose preservation we want to encourage come in a variety of types and levels of importance.
 - In a country where more than half of the structures in many communities were built before WWII, but **only five percent, on**

average, are protected through traditional preservation tools we are looking at alternatives to historic district zoning. **Conservation and sustainability districts—which focus much more on form and environmental sustainability than architectural features—are** preservation tools for the future.

- The change of working **against** to working **with** marginalized communities in **retaining their community structures** (both social and spatial) is among the central crossroads for the preservation movement today.
- Finally, in the U.S. we need to follow the model that you developed and use so effectively — the **conceptualization of cultural and environmental conservation as the same thing**, but along a continuum. Historic preservation is an environmentally conscious activity, but our work should also be about the conservation of landscapes, including their living components and ecological systems. That puts preservation in the mix of the work to address the impacts of climate change.
- Climate change and its impact on the planet is **THE defining issue** of our time. The National Trust here in the U.K. has been a leader in putting conservation at the forefront of the work to mitigate global climate impacts. INTO has also taken a strong lead in bringing groups together to

insert heritage conservation groups into the international conversation. Unfortunately, in the U.S. we have not made that same connection.

- As we think about change in the way we do our work, it is imperative that we make this focus key across all National Trust organizations and institutions.
- In the U.S. and elsewhere, we are battling governments and private interests that have downplayed the significance of climate change on our heritage, our economies, and our ways of life. We have much to learn from your National Trust and your efforts.
- The story of climate change and heritage is complex. And there are ways we are working on this issue in the U.S.
- Nome, Alaska, like many Native villages, is off of Alaska's road system. It can be reached only by plane (about a ninety-minute flight from Anchorage); by dogsled, most notably as the finish line of the Iditarod race; or by ship.
- It is this last transportation option that begins to differentiate Nome from its neighbors. Unlike with nearby villages, the ships that come to Nome are not barges that offload food and fuel supplies once a year during the summer's open waters. These ships are both larger and more varied—tanker and cargo traffic, gold dredges, commercial fishing vessels, research icebreakers, and cruise ships.

- With less ice on the water, Nome is seeing more and bigger ships each year. In September 2016, the *Crystal Serenity*, an 820-foot cruise ship carrying 1,700 passengers and crew, made a port call in Nome on its way to New York City through the Northwest Passage—the largest cruise ship ever to ply that route.
- With receding ice, Nome has seen increased vessel traffic not only traveling the Bering Strait and through the Northwest Passage and Northeast Passage, but also just arriving sooner and departing later. A port that for 15 years was managed by one person now has a staff of five. There is an opportunity for increased commercial and pleasure traffic, but the domino effect is that it has increased the risk in the area for vessel accidents and maritime incidents—oil spills and life safety issues associated with that growth—in mariners in the region.
- This is the climate change story that emerges from Nome’s city officials: a small, remote town trying to strike a delicate balance between capturing the economic opportunity and mitigating the risks and strains that come with the increased exploitation of a rapidly warming Arctic.
- More ships mean more debris, more trash, and more waste streams that affect ocean ecosystems and subsistence hunting of marine mammals.

- “There is a tremendous concern about subsistence hunting,” says Nome mayor Richard Beneville. “A ship going through the Bering Strait could create a wake that is felt for miles. And a seal hunter might be knocked in. With notice, the cruise ships can change course during hunting season, but that doesn’t always happen. “It’s all having a tremendous impact on subsistence lifestyle, which is 10,000 years old.”
- This story comes from Victoria Herrmann, the president and managing director of the Arctic Institute and the lead researcher for *America's Eroding Edges*, a project supported in part by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She notes that the more her research for *America's Eroding Edges* straddles historic preservation and climate action, the more she notices an important similarity.
- Both are **forward looking** and dedicated to securing a future world that connects to its past *not through recollections* but by preserving tangible and intangible historic assets. However, **climate change and cultural heritage professionals alike often overlook the future-looking nexus of climate change and historic preservation** that focuses on the next generation.

Change

- Thankfully, many National Trusts around the world have a legacy of work that includes pushing the envelope for change.

- With a long history of fighting development which threatens historic properties, why would the National Trust in the U.S. partner with a shopping center developer to radically re-imagine a shuttered historic site? Because saving Cooper-Molera Adobe, a Trust Historic Site that has been a locus of community and commerce in Monterey for longer than California has been a part of the United States, **required new perspectives.**
- Now a sign on the entrance prepares visitors that “this is not your usual house museum.” Here they choose their own path through bilingual exhibits that mix historic collections with contemporary art. It is truly an astounding transformation, and—just as the Trust did five decades ago at Drayton Hall—our work at Cooper Molera **gives other historic sites permission to try new approaches.**
- The National Trust movement has been at the forefront of the effort to transform preservation and conservation through the years.
- In the U.S., my colleagues and I **shared and celebrated stories** from our past that opened new understandings of the nation’s history and why we are the people we are today.
- Stories like. . .
 - The ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians, who one thousand years ago occupied the lands around the soaring twin rock spires of Chimney Rock in Colorado.

- The oldest continuously occupied public building in the country— Santa Fe’s Palace of the Governors—which continues to preserve and interpret the history of the many people who have called New Mexico home.
 - And Pauli Murray—an African American member of the LGBTQ community, a Civil Rights and Women’s Rights activist, the author of the work that Thurgood Marshall called “The Bible for Civil Rights Law,” a lawyer, the first female African American priest in the Episcopal Church, and a saint in that church.
 - She grew up in a modest house in Durham, North Carolina, proving that ordinary places can produce extraordinary people. That restored house is a place where her work continues, almost 35 years after her death.
- Together all of our colleagues at National Trusts around the world have worked to make our organizations leaders in the fight to **ensure that old places are part of our individual and collective memories, connecting over a continuum of time, to create community and national identity.** Together we have shown that **there is a future for our past.**
 - **Congratulations for the legacy of your work. Embrace the promise of our work ahead.**
 - **I look forward to what’s next.** Thank you.