

The Camera & Clipboard

Historical & Architectural Survey Newsletter



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COMMITTEE APPROVES NEW CLG SURVEY PROCESSES

The Best Practice Committee— an advisory group whose seven members are involved in different aspects of historical & architectural survey— met on September 21. The majority of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of new processes to be introduced for CLG survey grants awarded in December 2005. These changes have been developed in response to the recent experience of OAHF staff and survey consultants. They are intended to improve the overall process of how and when products are submitted and reviewed. It is hoped these revisions will not only tailor the process to the specific characteristics of individual projects but also produce higher quality survey forms and reports.

Key changes to the processes include:

1. Different levels of review and required communication with OAHF staff based upon varying levels of project difficulty and/ or personnel experience: For example, consultants will be asked to submit 10 percent, 5 percent or no sample draft forms for staff review. The required written progress reports will range from several throughout the project-- either from the CLG contact or the consultant-- to none at all. All projects will still require an initial meeting with the CLG contact, consultant and relevant staff members, but the number of required meetings over the course of the project will vary. In the new process final draft survey forms may be submitted either in smaller batches (new) or all together (no change)

2. Greater CLG involvement in the review of products: CLG contacts will be required to check and approve the final draft forms and draft survey report before submitting these items to OAHF staff for review. Their review will be based upon a one-page checklist. If the CLG contact does not approve the products, the final draft forms and draft survey report will be returned to the consultant for corrections prior to submission for OAHF staff review and comment.
3. Request for input after the project is completed: Both the CLG contact and the consultant will be asked to complete a standard evaluation form. This questionnaire will ask specific questions about the survey process and materials, assistance provided by OAHF staff and final products produced.

At this time these changes will affect only new CLG survey projects, neither ongoing CLG nor SHF surveys. Based upon the experience of using these new methods with CLG projects, the same or slightly refined methods likely will be introduced for SHF grant-funded projects some time in the future. Watch this space for more details.

Other topics discussed at the BPC meeting included the feasibility of creating a professional organization for historical & architectural survey consultants and planned revisions to the Architectural Inventory Form (#1403). This group will meet again in March 2006.

The activity that is the subject of this material has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Historic Preservation Act, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendations by the Department of the Interior or the Society. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally-assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, Washington, D.C. 20240.

These activities are also partially funded by the State Historical Fund, a program of the Colorado Historical Society.

NEW PRICE FOR SURVEY MANUAL

Effective October 2005 the new price for the *Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Manual-Volume I: The Steps* (revised 2005) is \$6.50. The cost of the manual has been increased to cover the expenses associated with printing and mailing this document. Order forms are available online or phone orders can be placed by calling 303-866-3395. Individuals who buy a manual at our offices will receive a 20 percent discount, making the publication a bargain at \$5.20.

For those of you who prefer not to spend your hard-earned money, the survey manual also is available online at www.coloradohistory-oahp.org/crforms/crforms1.htm.

SAVE THE DATE

Staff will deliver two new half-day workshops on Wednesday, February 8, 2006. These offerings will be held in conjunction with the Colorado Preservation, Inc. statewide preservation conference, *Saving Places 2006: Building on the Past*.

One workshop will explore *Identifying, Evaluating and Nominating Post-World War II Residential Neighborhoods*. This session is intended for private survey consultants, members and staff of historic preservation commissions and other individuals interested in the history and domestic architecture of the recent past. This workshop will explore the key architectural styles and building types of the era, examine prevalent development patterns and offer tips on designating Post-World War II districts to the National Register.

The second workshop will cover *Identification, Evaluation and Treatment of Historic Linear Resources*. This is an advanced session for survey consultants, federal and state land managers, transportation agency staff and the owners and operators of historic linear resources: trails, roads, highways, railroads, electric distribution systems and irrigation ditches and canals. The workshop will focus on researching and recording linear resources as part of project area

surveys, evaluating these resources for National Register eligibility within a project area and designing treatment plans to avoid or minimize adverse effects.

Both workshops are limited to 35 participants each. These programs are not included in the basic conference registration price; there is an additional fee for the workshops. For details about registration for these pre-conference offerings and the rest of the conference events, go to CPI's website: www.coloradopreservation.org.

CAVEAT EMPTOR

A word of caution for those of you contemplating using Mpix.com, the Internet-based firm mentioned in the Photographic Standards for Intensive Level Historical & Architectural Surveys (posted on the OAHN website), to process your digital black and white images on true black and white paper:

While consultants who have submitted digital files to Mpix.com were pleased with the quality of images, cost of developing and speed of service this firm provides, they have discovered one less than satisfactory issue. It seems the printed photos are not returned in any logical order. Instead, the hand-sorted images are sent back in unlabeled envelopes.

Digital photography, despite its numerous advantages, does not have the same type of enforced order of rolls and exposure numbers as 35mm film. To the processing firm, who is more interested in providing high-quality prints than maintaining any required order, the hand-sorting method is practical. Unfortunately, this arrangement means with large batches of photos--such as would be submitted for an historical & architectural survey with various views of each surveyed resource-- the consultant probably will need to spend a great deal of time and effort to sort the photographs.

Given this discovery about Mpix.com, it would be a good idea to inquire about how processed digital images will be sorted and packaged before committing to using any local or Internet-based firms for digital photo developing.



NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLES / TYPES ADDED TO THE LEXICON

by Dale Heckendorn

False Front Commercial

The false front commercial building type is an icon of the urban pioneer West. When movie directors or theme park designers erect a typical western town, the false front commercial building usually plays a prominent role. Unlike many myths of the West, the false front commercial building truly was a common sight in Colorado. Such buildings were constructed in mountain mining towns, plains agricultural communities, and early railroad centers from the late nineteenth through the early years of the twentieth century.

Shopkeepers, hotel proprietors, and other entrepreneurs were reluctant to invest heavily to erect a place of business during Colorado's uncertain boom and bust period of the late nineteenth century. Yet, they also wanted to project an image of stability and success to prospective customers. Particularly in the first few years of a community's development, many stores consisted of little more than canvas tents over wood platform floors. Once the local sawmill was established or the railroad arrived, sources of wood construction materials were more plentiful. Sound business economics led commercial building owners to budget their spending for substantial facades while relegating the secondary sides of buildings to a cheaper utilitarian treatment. The result was the ubiquitous false front commercial building.

In simplest terms, a false front is a front wall that extends above the roof and the sides of a building to create a more impressive facade. The false front commercial building has four major defining design characteristics. First, the facade (main or street side) rises to form a parapet (upper wall) which hides most or nearly all of the roof. Second, the roof is almost always a front gable, though gambrel and bowed roofs are occasionally found. Third, a better grade of materials is often used on the facade than on the sides or rear of the building. And fourth, the facade exhibits greater ornamentation than do the other sides of the building.

These buildings are nearly always constructed of wood, either log in the earliest examples or wood frame in latter types. Facades are usually wood sided, though other surface treatments were used, including pressed metal, stucco, and rolled asphalt siding. Occasional examples may be found of buildings with a brick or stone facade. The most traditional late nineteenth and early twentieth-century false front commercial building is wood frame, one to two stories in height, on a rectangular floor plan, with a front-gabled roof.

A commercial street lined with false front buildings created visual continuity and an urban atmosphere. If a community achieved a degree of success and stability, merchants and other commercial building owners chose both to erect new brick buildings and to replace existing wooden false fronts. Fire often swept through early commercial districts, eliminating most of the wood false front buildings. If the town rebuilt,

the second generation of commercial buildings usually employed more stable, fire-resistant brick or stone construction. These later buildings, like false fronts, generally used more elaborate facade materials and detailing. However, the roofs were most often flat or gently rear sloping and the facades did not rise above the side walls. Therefore, such buildings are not classified as false front commercial.

Common elements:

- Front gable roof
- Facade parapet extending above roof
- Wood-frame construction
- One to two stories
- Elaborate cornice

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False Front Commercial

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The photographs on the next two pages show various examples of False Front Commercial buildings.

The Munro Mercantile in Rifle illustrates the typical one-story wood frame false front commercial building. The facade parapet rises above the side walls and completely hides the front-gabled roof.



George R. Porter's general store in Sneffels employs a false front to give the impression the one and one-half story building is actually a full two stories in height. The facade is of horizontal siding while the side wall is of vertical board-and-batten construction. The facade cornice is embellished with brackets.



This livery stable in Rifle is also a one and one-half story false front. Instead of a flat parapet, a semicircular pediment hides the upper gable end. Triangular peaked parapets are another common variation.

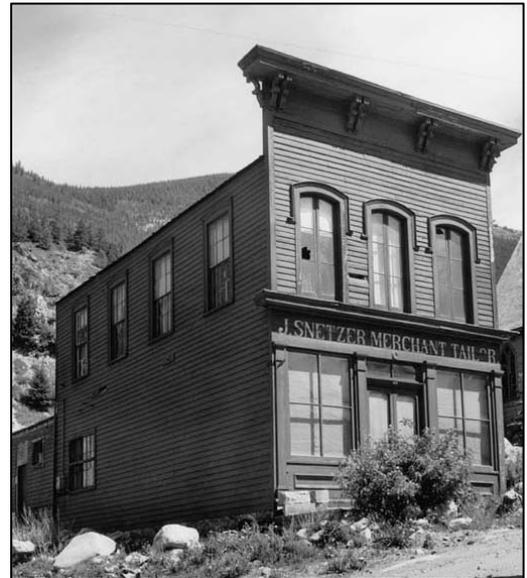
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False Front Commercial

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Jacob Snetzer's tailor shop in Georgetown is a full two stories in height. Although the facade and side wall are both covered with horizontal wood siding, the facade is much more elaborate and features hood molding on the second-story windows, a secondary cornice above the sign and an embellished primary cornice with paired brackets.



A row of false front commercial buildings gives early 1880s Main Street in Dillon a prosperous and established appearance.

*The Spray Coffee and Spice Company in Denver is **not** classified as a false front commercial building. Though the facade is more elaborate than the side wall, the front parapet does not rise above that on the side, and a gently rear-sloping roof is used instead of a front gable.*



All images from the CHS collection at Denver Public Library-Western History/Genealogy Department. Available at www.photoswest.org



WRITING HISTORY

You have spent hours researching in the library, combing local history archive sources and conducting oral history interviews. It is now time to synthesize all of this wonderful research material into an informative, concise, well-written historic context. Each individual has his or her own approach to writing. The following advice has been taken from eminent historian and best-selling author Stephen E. Ambrose's *To America: Personal Reflections of an Historian* (2002).

1. Keep your narration in chronological order since that is the way it happened.
2. Start your sentence, or your paragraph, with a time place clause—events happened here or there on this or that date.
3. Never use passive voice. Ambrose provides the following example. He states "Abraham Lincoln was shot dead in Washington, D.C., at Ford's Theatre, on April 14, 1865" is a bad sentence. But provides the sentence, "On April 14, 1865, at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., John Wilkes Booth assassinated Abraham Lincoln" as a better version of the same information.
4. Ambrose offers the following advice from his Ph.D. advisor: a good sentence is like a good play—the reader wants to know where and when the action is taking place, then who is responsible for the action, then the result.
5. Finally, Ambrose suggests reading your own material aloud since it forces you to listen. According to the author, "If you stumble, if the words come out awkwardly, if you lose your place, if there is no flow, you had best go back and try again."

Do you have tips on writing history? Please consider sharing your expertise. Send your best writing advice to Mary Therese Anstey. Or, better yet, offer to write an article about this topic (or any other historical & architectural survey-related subject of interest to you) for a future issue of *The Camera & Clipboard*.



**ASK THE
STAFF**
by Les S.
Moore

Dear Les:

I am beginning a project to intensively survey a residential neighborhood. The community has never completed any comprehensive survey projects. However, the file search did indicate inventory forms exist for a few of the resources within my survey area. Should I resurvey these houses?

-- Confounded in Conifer

Dear Confounded:

There are several factors to consider when deciding whether to resurvey selected resources within a survey area.

It is always a good idea to ask your clients' opinions regarding re-survey. Based upon the goals of the current survey project, they may opt either for or against resurvey. If the community has never done any survey projects and this project represents the first step in a multi-phased effort to survey the entire town, then the locals will probably be most interested in surveying as many resources as possible. Therefore, they may prefer to expand the survey area slightly to pick up additional resources instead of resurveying properties for which they already have some records. However, if your survey project was planned to explore district potential within the survey area, the town will need the most current data to make determinations of contributing and non-contributing status. In this case, resurvey is recommended.

Another issue to weigh is when the building was last surveyed. There is no standard expiration date for building inventories. You need to consider the community in which you are surveying. In towns which have experienced a great deal of growth and where historic resources are under particular development pressure, there may be a need to survey more often. The date of the last survey also can relate directly to the quantity of information gathered, another factor to consider. The current Architectural Inventory Form

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(#1403) has evolved, with OAHF staff requiring more detailed information about surveyed properties over time. If the previously surveyed properties within your project area were recorded using OAHF historical & architectural forms from the late 1970s and 1980s (“the pink and green forms”), then resurvey using form #1403 is highly recommended.

A third issue to consider when deciding whether to resurvey is the project budget and scope of work. You did not say whether your survey is grant-funded, but it is important to remember such historical & architectural survey projects are based upon contractual obligations to complete certain tasks for a set cost. Just because you decide to resurvey selected resources does not mean additional money is available for this effort. Therefore, you must decide, in consultation with your clients, whether resurvey represents the best use of your project budget.

In the final analysis, you must consider all of these issues—your clients’ wishes, the time elapsed since the last survey and the project scope and budget—when determining if resurvey should be completed.

If you do decide to resurvey selected buildings within your project area, the next consideration is which form to use. Many consultants assume the Cultural Resource Re-evaluation Form (#1405) is best for recording previously surveyed sites. While the name of this form sounds promising, the actual information requested is better suited to recording changes to archaeological sites than to resurveying historical & architectural resources. For that reason it is best to complete a new #1403 when resurveying previously recorded resources within the project area of an historical & architectural survey project. This may seem like a lot of work, but only the Architectural Inventory Form includes the amount and depth of information necessary to note the exact building location, document the property history and architecture and make determinations of individual National Register eligibility.

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