

The Camera & Clipboard

Historical & Architectural Survey Newsletter



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LUNCH AND LEARN: BEST PRACTICE COMMITTEE TO HOST CPI SESSION

Don't miss your chance to register for the Historical & Architectural Survey Forum Affinity Meeting being held as part of CPI's annual historic preservation conference. This box lunch session is an opportunity for you to bring both your appetite and your historical & architectural survey-related issues to a meeting with other members of the survey community.



The target audience for this session includes historical & architectural survey consultants, members of historic preservation commissions, representatives from CLGs and local communities, students, and others with direct involvement or interest in historical & architectural surveys.

Members of the Best Practice Committee will facilitate the session. The Committee envisions an informal gathering with plenty of time for lively discussion, survey-related questions, and networking opportunities. They also will do their best to address the topics of interest to *Camera & Clipboard* readers who responded to the questionnaire regarding this session.

The affinity group meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 7, 2007 at the El Jebel Events Center at 1770 Sherman Street in Denver and will take place from 12:00 to 1:15. This timing allows participants to attend both this lunch meeting and the morning and/ or afternoon pre-conference workshops.

If you are interested in attending the Historical & Architectural Survey Forum Affinity Meeting, box lunches are \$12 with vegetarian options available upon request. Payment should be made to CPI on the standard conference registration form. Registration forms for the conference are available online at <http://www.coloradopreservation.org/spc/index.html>. The Best Practice Committee looks forward to your participation in the box lunch session.

If you have general questions about CPI's *2007 Saving Places Conference: Planning, Growth, and Preservation*, you may call 303-893-4260 or email info@coloradopreservation.org.

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HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL SURVEYS AMIDST 'BOOM' CONDITIONS

The new year provides an opportunity to reassess. While your personal goals may spring most immediately to mind, the focus of this article is historical & architectural survey approaches, especially for the numerous Colorado communities facing exponential growth.

Contextually, it is important to remember our state has always experienced periods of boom and bust. In the mid- to late-1800s gold and silver seekers flooded in, hastily erecting towns near the latest mineral discovery and, in many cases, abandoning the upstart communities as soon as deposits petered out. Periodic agricultural depressions and unfavorable weather conditions, most notably extreme erosion experienced during the 'Dust Bowl' years of the 1920s and 1930s, caused similar contractions in small farming towns on the Eastern Plains. Conversely, returning G.I.s, new jobs in the aerospace and military industry, and a population shift toward the western United States encouraged unprecedented post-WWII suburban growth around Colorado's largest cities. The continuing allure of our quality of life has made Weld County one of the fastest growing places in the United States, with several other areas of the state also appearing in the top-20 list for growth. Colorado's mountain towns also are experiencing a boom associated with cultural emphasis on leisure and segments of the population able to afford second (or third) homes.

So, what is the best approach to historical & architectural survey in the face of such booms? The first temptation may be to wring our hands and to consider growth the enemy of preservation. Too often preservationists concentrate on what is lost instead of facing the reality of changes to the built environment and recognizing the opportunity these changes present for documenting current conditions. Historical & architectural surveys record a 'snapshot in time'. When surveying the evidence of booms-- such as large additions to historic homes in areas where property values are on the rise-- surveyors may need to adopt the concept of history starts now. In other words, survey is not just about recording unaltered or pristine examples of homes built prior to 1957. Instead it involves collecting information now which may gain significance later. Survey projects seek to fulfill both short-term and long-term needs. A survey which compares current conditions to those in the past can not only serve as a powerful anti-sprawl tool but also provide the data for current planning efforts if it indicates where the greatest changes are occurring and it provides information suitable for preventing certain types of change.

In a competitive grant-funded survey climate it is tempting to view certain areas as 'too far gone' to warrant documentation. While some communities have reached this point, in other cases we may need to be more forward-thinking. Historians now clamber for photographs and details of boom towns such as 1880s Cripple Creek. But think what a loss it would be to current researchers if someone had discouraged the collecting of such data because the community had changed too much from its origins. With this concept in mind, we need to resist approaching all survey projects as a means to identify traditional historic districts where the resources are architecturally significant and represent the most intact examples of selected styles within the community. It is important to realize current surveys may be recording areas which are not eligible now but instead represent the historic districts of the future. The types of alterations completed to maximize the lot size or serve the greatest number of new owners and renters may gain significance over time. In this sense the survey process is more like a science experiment (recording ongoing phenomena) than it is historical research (documenting long-established architectural patterns).

Certain survey techniques can be useful when attempting to record resources with an eye toward significance in the future. These include developing an historic context which identifies both historic *and* current building/ development trends and taking photographs of not only individual resources but also street-scapes or the area as a whole. Of course, these two approaches benefit not only communities in the midst of a boom but also all survey areas since they gather the type of information which proves useful in the long term to a variety of survey form and report users.



NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLES / TYPES ADDED TO LEXICON

Architecture of the WPA in Eastern Colorado

The last issue of *The Camera & Clipboard* introduced three style sub-types associated with Works Progress Administration projects in eastern Colorado-- WPA Art Deco, WPA Moderne, and WPA Modernist. The fourth style sub-type is WPA Rustic. The material below comes from the eastern Colorado New Deal survey work conducted by Deon Wolfenbarger.

WPA Rustic

Rustic architecture is typically associated with mountain-area tourist lodges and the buildings and structures constructed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The NPS played a prominent role in promoting this style or method of design, not only through its association with Civilian Conservation Corps projects, but also with the issuance of several publications in the 1930s. The NPS published a three-volume study of Rustic park and recreation structures in 1938 written by architectural consultant Albert H. Good. Many of the period publications, or the designs of the structures within, were the creations of Herbert Maier. Maier was the architect/landscape architect who headed the NPS district that included Denver. Through the development of the NPS's design philosophy, he played a key role in promoting the principles of Rustic park architecture during the 1920s and 1930s. Maier assembled design booklets containing examples of features built in a variety of national, state, and local parks, with the explicit intent these designs not be copied but instead adapted to the local topography, conditions, and cultural influences. He expected variations and diversity based on each site's unique cultural and natural history. The designs were therefore united by principle, not by architectural prototype.

Maier's principles were based on the use of native materials, and indigenous or "frontier" forms and construction methods. This design philosophy coincidentally meshed with the goals of the WPA relief work program. His basic design principles included: screening; the use of indigenous and native materials; adaptation of indigenous or frontier methods of construction; construction of buildings with low silhouettes and horizontal lines; the avoidance of right angles and straight lines; and the elimination of lines of demarcation between nature and built materials. For sites unable to sustain plant screening or where it was impossible to hide the demarcation between a site and the building's foundation, he recommended designs with low silhouettes and horizontal lines, a low-pitched roof, and colors that blended with the natural surroundings. Linda Flint McClelland notes in her study of NPS architecture that Maier believed, "using indigenous or native materials, however, was the 'happiest means of blending the structure with its surroundings' and was the characteristic that popularly defined 'rustic architecture.'"



The caretaker's residence at Willow Creek Park in Lamar, Prowers County, shows the influence of both WPA Rustic park architecture and the Pueblo Revival style.

Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, June 2004.

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WPA Rustic

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Rustic architecture was meant to provide simple pragmatic solutions, following both function and nature. Federal relief buildings were also simple and functional. The use of native materials in many instances may have been an adaptation of necessity and not choice, but it resulted in buildings and structures reflecting their natural surroundings. The NPS's principle of adapting indigenous construction methods (including the use of primitive tools) also coincided with Depression-era goals for relief construction projects. The WPA sought to put as many people back to work as possible. This meant using hand tools or hand labor instead of power tools or equipment. Both in NPS Rustic and WPA construction, hand labor affected the patterns of masonry and design of buildings, bridges, and culverts.

The use of locally available construction materials in the national parks was intended to help structures blend with nature; in WPA projects, local materials were used due to federal employment and economic policies. Under both construction programs, the exterior appearance of buildings varied by locale. Maier strove for just such local variation in developing his design principles; his greatest fear was that all "rustic" buildings would look alike.



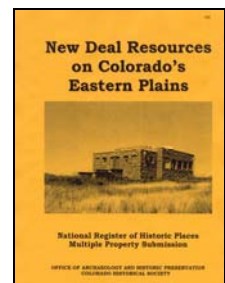
Designs were meant to be adjusted for local topography, geology, and cultural influences. In dry areas with an abundance of rock, stone construction with little wood was appropriate. Each stone type required different quarrying and masonry techniques. These variables resulted in a variety of external appearances within Rustic architecture.

Two Buttes Gymnasium in Baca County differs little in plan from WPA Modernist versions, but its use of locally quarried, rock-faced sandstone identifies it as WPA Rustic.

Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, September 2004.

A key distinction between Rustic style architecture as practiced in most national

parks and WPA Rustic resources is the demarcation between the building and the landscape. The flat, treeless plains of eastern Colorado afforded limited opportunities to screen or "plant out" the base of buildings. Utilizing natural contours, when there are virtually no contours, was also impossible. Most of these buildings employed horizontal lines, flat roofs, and native materials, but many still stand out in their landscape setting. However, when one views the Rustic WPA buildings of southeastern Colorado in comparison with the Moderne concrete examples in the east central counties, the application of Rustic architecture principles becomes evident.



For further information about the architecture and history of the New Deal in eastern Colorado, see the National Register multiple property document, *New Deal Resources on Colorado's Eastern Plains*.





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

Dear Les: I am writing a grant application for an intensive-level survey in a rural area. How much time should I allow in my project schedule for obtaining the necessary owner permission for properties which cannot be surveyed from the public right of way?
-- Applicant in Akron

Dear Applicant:

I am glad to hear you are thinking about owner permission issues during the grant-planning process. Too many applicants treat this step as an after-thought, something to worry about once grant funds are awarded. This approach rarely works and the lack of planning shows in the survey products, giving the community incomplete records with miniscule or foliage-obscured photographs and few if any details about the architecture of the surveyed properties.

Answering your question is rather challenging and can depend upon a number of factors. The nature of the owners within your proposed survey area can impact the amount of time necessary to complete the owner permission process--mostly full-time owner-occupiers rather than seasonal or absentee owners *should* account for shorter periods spent obtaining permission. Be sure you have reliable addresses and know whether residents receive their mail at their homes or from post office boxes. While owner permission is required to access private property, also allow for notifying renters (if applicable) since they are the individuals most likely to encounter the survey consultant on the property. Keep in mind the owner notification process impacts not only the time schedule but also the budget for your grant-funded project.

Owner permission and support has the potential to make or break a project. With this in mind, you may consider holding a public meeting to inform owners about your proposed survey project before the grant application is submitted. You could even attach signed permission forms to your grant application, demonstrating to readers/ scorers you have started on the owner permission process and will be ready for your hired consultant to start survey fieldwork quickly if funds are awarded.

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