

# Good essay about historic preservation movement

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



## **How does the level of social awareness distinguish the historic preservation movement in the United States?**

In the 1960s, people had a unique view of social awareness. The view of people to the community meant that everything around them had to have been in place for as long as they can remember. The definition of social awareness during this time was the consciousness of an individual to their neighbors and the history they shared. It was a matter of who lived here and whether that person was born in a place or was he or she a “newcomer.” Another key aspect of social awareness during this time was in the economic status of individuals with each social class having specific social qualities that distinguish it from other classes (Brand, 1995).

Historic preservation in the United States of America is a popular and local movement by historians or locals who wish to preserve important historic aspects of the country. Any activity that seeks to preserve any historic site, building or arts, is a preservationist. There were two distinct groups in the U. S that sought to preserve different historic aspects. The government and the private sector were the two major players in historic preservation. This was during the eighteenth century. Many changes have taken place since that time and the goals and groups involved have also changed.

### **Goals of the Historic Preservation Movement**

The movement had specific goals in the preservation of historic buildings and sites across the country. The main goals of the historic preservationist movement were to preserve the old building from destruction. Old buildings were at risk of demolition where they would be destroyed to pave the way, for new and modernized buildings. The movement, therefore, sought to

ensure that the buildings were safe from any purchase or demolition. The movement also aimed at preserving natural sites like National parks (Brown-Saracino, 2004). Some of the most recent goals of these movements is to administer preservation grants for various individuals and groups that want to preserve historic sites or buildings. They offer grants to individuals and administer how they use the money to make the site better than it was before (Tyler, Ligibel & Tyler, 2009).

The other goal of this movement is to restore old towns and historic buildings that have historic significance. This involves identifying these towns and buildings, and restoring and reconstructing them to fit their former shape. This is what happened to Williamsburg that had been lost for centuries and most of its historic buildings destroyed. Though some preservationists may view this as a bad way of preserving historic sites, this was a necessary move in an effort to preserve the historic site that held a lot of significance to the local community. The group also ensures that there is a counteractive action towards any threat from outsiders who may want to demolish or cause any damage to historic places. In this case, the locals and other preservationists come up with zoning ordinance that makes any erection of buildings on such sites illegal. This prevents anyone from tampering with historic sites (Reichl, 1997).

The other goal of these movements was to create historic documents by going to various historic sites and documenting any historic architecture and structures. This was done by employing any architecture, photographers, artists and craftsmen who would go around identifying and documenting historic information that were of significance to the local communities. The

documentation process entailed cooperation between the federal government and the local communities in order to correctly document historic information. The formation of the national trust also widened the goals of historic preservationists to include supporting, broadening and strengthening preservation efforts by the local communities. It also aimed at ensuring communication existed between the stakeholders in the preservation efforts.

## **Groups involved in historic preservation efforts**

There are various groups during the eighteenth century to the twentieth century that did a lot to preserve America's history. The first attempt to preserve the historic site was by Ann Pamela Cunningham from South California. She led a crusade to save Mount Vernon with the group, Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1853. The first groups and preservation efforts associated historic sites with national heritage and acted out of patriotic instincts. The other group with the goal of preserving historic sites was the Daughters of the American Revolution whose main goal was to preserve one historic site that was used as the local headquarters. The Colonial Dames also had the same motive as the Daughters of the American Revolution. During this time, many local associations were formed by locals, which sought to preserve historic sites within their society. In most cases, the historic sites under preservation help political significance to the society. With the beginning of the nineteenth century, the motives for historic preservation broadened to include economic cast. During this time, industrialists were the main proponents of historic preservation. Some of these individuals included John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford, who founded

the Greenfield village.

In 1910, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) was formed, and it focused on architectural preservation. The other group of preservationists was the San Antonio Conservation Society formed, by women artists who saw the value of historic sites.

The desire for some groups of people to preserve the local settings against the change in time and outside influence can best describe social awareness for these groups of historic preservationists. For most preservationists, maintaining a close tie with their places comes with a strong, body they develop over time as they live in the same place. They do not wish for this to change hence will resist any effort by anyone to change the setting they are used to. Social awareness entails being conscious of everything happening in the society where the person lives. In this case, both the low, middle and high class families have different priorities when it comes to these issues. However, one clear fact is that these people want to remain the same environment, and will come together to resist any change that may threaten the social setting they are currently. The threat of development, especially when it involves economic development that sacrifices everything they are used to will meet resistance from all parties involved (Yung & Chan, 2011). The reason for fighting for preservation differs with each social class, the awareness of their environment and what it means to each group is an important factor driving them to fight for its preservation. In the case of the low class families, they want to safeguard their homes because this is affordable to them, and they are assured of their security. On the other hand, high-class families strive to restore architectural buildings because

they link it to a high status and distinction from the rest of the society. With the preservation of the historic building, the young people interested in investment knew that they would be distinct from the uniformity and anonymity that comes from the modernist society. It became apparent from the reaction of different social classes on the issue of demolition of historic structures and preservation that these historic sites brought a sense of belonging to different classes though in different contexts (Bourdieu, 1984). For the middle class families, the issue of preservation meant a source of exchange values between different social classes. The awareness of the value of different structures and its meaning to different classes assured them of increased income (Wai-Yin & Shu-Yun 2004). In Britain, the fight for historic preservation was the same as that seen in the United States. The efforts of minority groups of people whose main goals were to protect the historic sites took it upon themselves to protect them. In Britain, groups were formed and the members identified and did everything to protect them. In this country, there were two main reasons for the fight for historic preservation. One of the reasons was the issue of class consciousness that required communal harmony and a sense of national identification. The other reason was the issue of elites who felt the need to have control over situations. The issue of preservation gave them an opportunity to rebuild communities that had been destroyed during industrialization. For them, it was the issue of demonstrating the source of their power and legitimizing it. The differences in how countries view preservation and how they use it for various purposes shows the intensity of social awareness and how it can shape a country's political and social structure (Barthel, 1989, March).

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