A Way with Words
How three women gave a voice to the preservation movement and made it a public affair

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Introduction.

A country without a past has the emptiness of a barren continent; and a city without old buildings is like a man without a memory.

Graeme Shankland, British planner

[Grassroots preservation] is empty pocketbooks, bloody fingers, and private satisfactions. It is long hours, hard work, and no pay. It is a personal dialogue with ghosts. It is a face-to-face confrontation with the past... It is an equation between self and history so powerful that it makes us lie down in front of bulldozers, raise toppled statues, salvage old boats.

Peter Neill, 45th National Preservation Conference, 1991
When people wander the halls of Mount Vernon, tracing the footsteps of Washington, stroll the sun dappled streets of Charleston, or feel pulled into the mecca of steel and concrete structures in New York, they are experiencing, in many respects, the victorious efforts of three exceptionally different women to preserve a quality of life that they had come to expect. These women — Ann Pamela Cunningham, Susan Pringle Frost, and Ada Louise Huxtable — connected the public with their surroundings, demanding assistance from their fellow citizen to take up a cause that affected them all. They have stood at the precipice of major changes occurring in preservation, from the very beginning of a foundering idea itself, and have not shirked the responsibility which they undertook. The preservation movement owes much to these tenacious women who refused to stand down from their passionate views on life and prevented the defacement of their living history in the form of the built environment.

In the face of a rapidly diving nation, Ann Pamela Cunningham rallied both the north and south behind the effort to purchase and protect the home of the nation’s forefather, George Washington. Her focus may have been a singular structure but her ideas set the precedent for future activists and preservation groups, permeating their actions well into the next century. On the other hand, Susan Pringle Frost saw the intransient value in protecting buildings that lacked a national significance. She pushed for new developments in preservation that would protect the city as a whole and her desire to reestablish the prominence of the neighborhood spurred further movements throughout the southeast and, eventually throughout the United States. Years later, Ada Louise Huxtable, an architecture critic for the *New York Times*, acknowledged the importance of structures, old and new, to the overall atmosphere of a city. Through her writing she pushed architecture into the language of the layman, allowing ordinary people to understand the importance of architecture in the cityscape and ultimately on their daily lives.

What united these women who advocated for different forms of preservation, at different periods in history, was their method of communication. Using the newspaper, they promoted preservation,
reaching out through the printed word for assistance, for acknowledgement, for understanding, and fundamentally establishing the importance of public participation to the success of the movement. This paper examines how these three women utilized the newspaper as a means of communication, how they brought to light efforts to preserve the past within the built environment, made it matter to the everyday person and how these lessons can be applied to contemporary events.
Ann Pamela Cunningham.

And while we bow our heads in veneration to our Greatest American citizen and hero, let us breathe a word of gratitude and loyalty to the woman who has done this great deed for the nation—Ann Pamela Cunningham.

Daughters of the American Revolution Newsletter, 1907

It has been said that, at its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.

William Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 2005
The crowning glory of the early preservation movement, and often the most acknowledged early success, was the purchase and maintenance of Mount Vernon by the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association. In 1853, Ann Pamela Cunningham, a frail spinster from the upcountry of South Carolina, received a letter from her mother in reference to the degraded state of the home:\footnote{A riding accident at the age of 17 left her with a spinal injury that often left her bedridden and struggling to breathe. Immense pain left her with a crippling addiction to laudanum, an alcoholic solution made from opium, which only worsened throughout her life. “I was in strong spasms, which were stopped by an opiate for a few hours.” Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association. \textit{Historical Sketch of Ann Pamela Cunningham: ‘The Southern matron,” founder of “The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.”} (New York: Marion Press, 1903).}{\footnote{Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., \textit{Presence of the Past} (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1965), 20.}

It was a lovely moonlit night that we went down the Potomac. I went on deck as the bell tolled and we passed Mount Vernon. I was painfully depressed at the ruin and desolation of the home of Washington, and the thought passed through my mind: Why was it that the women of his country not try to keep it in repair, if men could not do it? It does seem such a blot on our country!\footnote{Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., \textit{Presence of the Past} (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1965), 20.}

That letter spurred Cunningham into action. She undertook the job of raising the funds necessary to purchase the home of George Washington, the father of the country. John Washington, then owner of the estate, asked $200,000 for the property, a sum often criticized for being unpatriotic and far too high.

Washington’s father, Augustine Washington, built the first structure on the site of present day Mount Vernon. Eventually, Washington desired to enlarge and expand his inherited home. The original house, built in 1735, was only one and a half stories tall and of modest architectural detail.

Washington’s first renovation to the structure occurred in 1758 and involved raising the height of the building to two and a half stories. From there he attempted to create a Palladian inspired structure that followed the Georgian trend of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century. However, symmetry eluded him as the placement of the central stairs just to the right of the entrance door prevented the windows from being placed an equal distance from each side of the main doorway. Washington texturized the wood siding so that it would resemble stone blocks, a building material used to showcase wealth and status. The final stage of expansion occurred in 1777 with the addition of two wings, the cupola, and the two story portico overlooking the river.
It was this structure Cunningham strove to protect and the first few meetings of women interested in the cause occurred in South Carolina and Georgia. However, from its conception in 1853, Cunningham struggled to gain the monetary backing necessary to purchase Mount Vernon. She received her break in March of 1857:

We started interest again in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama; but it took time. Old Charleston city awoke...I was proud. The ball was now rolling; the action of Charleston had started the country.³

Eventually women throughout the nation were calling for sections of what had become the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association to be created in their regions, making this the first successful nationwide movement despite the fact that the nation was swiftly dividing.

With the enlargement of the Association, Cunningham put her talents as an able organizer to the test. She became the head regent for the Association and then designated vice-regents in each state that would handle the money raised in their respective areas and further promote the goals in saving Mount Vernon. One such vice-regent, Jenny Ward, volunteered to endorse Mount Vernon and the Ladies’ Association in her state of Kansas but found it to be a difficult task, which she acknowledged in a letter to the women’s group:

It was considered no easy task to awaken interest in an object so remote in time and place among a people intensely occupied in building up and promoting the varied interests of our State...Mount Vernon is nearly two thousand miles away and its history beyond the memory of all.⁴

This would become a common motif in the foundation of preservation, the struggle of raising awareness and getting people to care.

The cause required the assistance of a nation and so a solid network of communication had to be established. The movement rested on the shoulders of the newspapers, word of mouth and dogged

³ Hosmer, 21
⁴ Hosmer, 21
determination could only go so far. Ann Pamela Cunningham utilized, to a great extant, the newspapers of the nation, believing in the power of publicity and valuing the newsmen as allies to her cause. She appealed first to the ladies of the South by placing advertisements in the Southern newspapers asking for funds in December of 1853, starting first with the Charleston Mercury, the local paper in Charleston, South Carolina. Ann Pamela Cunningham, anonymously styled “A Southern Matron,” wrote this first call to arms attempting to propel women of the South into the noble cause of protecting the home of George Washington. Establishing good relations between the Association and press provided a stable foundation for the group to gather support and maintain communication over a vast area. In a letter “to the Ladies the South” in 1854, Ann Pamela Cunningham discussed briefly changes to the organization of the Association and the assistance provided by a newspaper editor:

We have adopted the one now in use from some general suggestions of the gallant editor of the Mobile Herald and Tribune – one of the first to speak for the cause and whose elegant pen has again and again been exerted to awaken dormant patriotism.

Other newspapers began printing advertisements for the Association as women across the South began to take up the mantle and band together for the purpose of raising money and awareness for Mount Vernon. In these advertisements the women themselves sent the call to fellow newspapers to support their efforts and reprint or advertise the attempt being made to save Mount Vernon. A letter, originally printed in the Richmond Enquirer, but reprinted in the Daily South Carolinian, listed the newspapers that the Association felt strongly would be of assistance to their labor:

We feel assured that the following papers, warm advocates of our cause, will generously aid in this matter, by becoming the “organ” of their respective States, viz: the Pennsylvania Inquirer, Philadelphia, Pa; Richmond Enquirer, Richmond, Va.; Wilmington Herald, Wilmington, N.C.; Republican, St. Louis, Missouri; Charleston Courier, Charleston,

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5 Hosmer, 23
7 A Southern Matron, “To the Ladies of the South,” Daily South Carolinian (Columbia, South Carolina), May 19, 1854.
The editors of the newspapers also made the call to their fellow colleagues in the field of American journalism to take up the pen and assist these women:

To our brother editors, too, in the whole Republic we extend the invitation to enlist, as knights in the order of Mount Vernon, and to do gallant and efficient service under the patriotic flag of “The Southern Matron,” both sounding to the onset and laying at her feet the fruits of Victory.

These champions of the cause provided the base for the network of communication that eventually led to victory for the women of the association. Newspapers provided a wider range of readers and allowed for a larger number of women to provide assistance.

The advertisements and letters within the newspapers read much the same, allowing for continuity of message. Each advertisement aimed to promote the cause of saving Mount Vernon by creating a feeling of shame in the reader, noting a sorrowful lack of patriotism should the calling be ignored. The use of emphatic language paralleled the intense feelings of the women in undertaking the monumental effort of raising $200,000 to purchase Mount Vernon. Their passionate desire to protect a relic of American history showed through the words written on newsprint, the only outcome: victory.

Calling upon the patriotism of the nation, at such a time of strife and dissention, was a way of achieving it. Resounding words gave way to crackling imagery, paragraphs dedicated to the veneration of George Washington and the patriotism that each American should harbor:

Can we sit beneath our own vine and fig tree—can we kindle the love light of domestic joy and happiness in our peaceful dwellings—can we grasp the legacy of freedom bequeathed to us and to our children, and then forget whose wisdom and whose valor, under Divine guidance, won those blessings and made them ours? Mothers of Georgia! does no Revolutionary blood flow in your veins? –no fire of patriotism kindled upon the altar of ‘76 burn in your bosoms?

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8 “Purchase of Mount Vernon Cheering Prospects,” *The Daily South Carolinian* (Columbia, South Carolina), April 3, 1857.
10 “Spirited and Patriotic Communication from Georgia,” *Daily Morning News* (Savannah, Georgia), March, 11, 1858.
These women felt their duty lay in saving Mount Vernon due to its historical association as the home and tomb of George Washington, an effort that lies on the patriotic sentimentality of those they asked for support:

Can you be still with closed souls and purses, while the world cries “Shame upon America,’ and suffer Mount Vernon, with all its sacred association, to become, as is spoken of and probably, the seat of manufacturers and manufactories? ...Never! Forbid it...!”

Furthermore, words promoting pride, specifically state and regional, filter in and out of the advertisements drawing upon the nature of humans to strive to be better than others. The country at the time of this enterprise had barely existed as such for more than 50 years; state pride, an effect of colonial separation, still ran deep. Ann Pamela Cunningham began the movement in the South, calling upon only Southern ladies to join the efforts. Sectionalizing the movement while simultaneously drawing upon the resonant pride felt within the region of all things Southern, requiring “moral courage and southern pride to sustain” the continuing efforts of the Association.

In many ways pulling upon the pride of the citizens of the United States mirrored the effort to awaken patriotism within the same souls, indirectly shaming those who disregarded the calling. Each state strove to be better than another, to be the preeminent participant in the revered cause:

It is a gratifying thought that our own native Georgia, and our cherished seaport Savannah, was the first to organize in this cause. Yes, first upon that altar reared by the patriotism and genius of a ‘Southern Matron,’ was laid our votive offering.’ Will our city and State now recede from that foremost position?

Participation in the cause assisted not only a larger effort but it provided each state a chance to showcase their supremacy within the nation. People thought of themselves concurrently as patriotic

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12 “To the Ladies of the South,” Daily South Carolinian (Columbia, South Carolina), May 19, 1854.
13 “Spirited and Patriotic Communication from Georgia,” Daily Morning News (Savannah, Georgia), March, 11, 1858.
14 “Purchase of Mount Vernon Cheering Prospects,” Daily South Carolinian (Columbia, South Carolina), April 3, 1857. Taken from the Richmond Enquirer. “The editor of the Charleston Courier...says in a recent number of that paper, “We are pleased to perceive that the beautiful city, partly perched on Shockoe and Church Hill, and partly reposing in the
and Virginian, or mothers and daughters of a particular state more so than daughters of a nation.\textsuperscript{15}

Patriotism may have created the original interest in the plight for the purchase of Mount Vernon, but state pride and rivalry kept it moving forward, preventing those who already joined from defecting as their participation had become a matter of state pride, not only patriotism.

The advertisements called directly upon the women of the nation to be the laborers of this cause and singled out men as the aids to women in their endeavor. First, “a call was made to the women of the South, to gather around his grave and become the Vestals to keep alive the fires of patriotism.” However, “\textit{Washington belonged not alone to the South! Again the call was made, and this time to the women of the Nation.}”\textsuperscript{16} While the cause went from a regional enterprise to a national one, the target audience for the appeal remained the women of the country. The task of purchasing Mount Vernon was seen as woman’s work, this home represented the domestic side of Washington, the genteel side of the great American general, and that fell under the domain of the women:

\begin{quote}
Daughters of North Carolina! The appeal is now made to you! To our fathers and Brothers, Husbands and Sons belong the lessons of his political wisdom and the emulation of his heroic example; but to preserve and hallow his home; to cherish all the tender recollections which cluster around it, and endear it to the hearts of his people, is a work of the heart, and \textit{that} belongs to women.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Women were to be the leaders of this movement and it belonged solely to them. When seeking assistance from men, it was in an appeal to help the women, not to contribute directly in the cause: “We call upon all our countrymen, to whom the name of Washington is a sacred word, to go zealously to

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\item the beautiful and romantic valley of the James River, is waking up to her duty, and to take her appropriate place in the picture.
\item We should indeed be gratified to see the ‘Old Dominion’ and the Palmetto State in honorable rivalry, in the glorious enterprise. It will never do to let even the Bunker Hill State outstrip both, or either of them in munificence of contribution…”
\item No, we reply, Virginia does not intend that any State shall equal her contribution. Her sons and daughters are not insensible to their delicate position, their solemn duty, their high privilege.”
\item “Purchase of Mount Vernon Cheering Prospects,” \textit{Daily South Carolinian} (Columbia, South Carolina), April 3, 1857. “We are assured that your Excellency, as a patriot and Virginian, will hail with pleasure the prospect—nay, the certainty, now—that Virginia, at no distant period, can take under her sacred charge the home and grave of Washington…”
\item “An Appeal for Mount Vernon,” \textit{Charleston Mercury} (Charleston, South Carolina), April 26, 1958.
\end{itemize}
work in aiding these ladies...”\textsuperscript{18} In this way, men could participate in the patriotic endeavor without infringing upon the work of women, even Edward Everett, the great orator who brought in a substantial sum of money for the purchase of Mount Vernon, provided his assistance to the women in an effort to help the cause.\textsuperscript{19} The women of the Association were not above using their weaker gender to guilt men into helping, “when woman asks for gold for such a sacred purpose, \textit{can men and patriots withhold it}?"\textsuperscript{20}

Eventually the women of the organization collected enough money to purchase the property and in 1860, while the country was on the brink of civil war, they took ownership of Mount Vernon which they hold to this day. Since this esteemed victory in protecting a historic house, many other organizations have attempted to emulate the success of the Association and utilize their methods to promote preservation of other areas.\textsuperscript{21} Cunningham’s victory at Mount Vernon set major precedents for future preservation efforts within America. First, preservation was foremost a grassroots effort propelled by private citizens, not the government, and secondly, women were to be the dominate figures in preservation for decades to come.\textsuperscript{22}

Through it all, the use of the press and publications, the women maintained a level of anonymity that forced people to view the cause in terms of the larger organization and not individual women. This was due, in part, to Southern mannerisms and, in part, to the times in which this occurred:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} “Purchase of Mount Vernon Cheering Prospects,” \textit{Daily South Carolinian} (Columbia, South Carolina), April 3, 1857. Taken from the \textit{Richmond Enquirer}.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Edward Everett was one of the greatest orators of the period. He was one of two speakers at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; the other speaker being President Lincoln who delivered the Gettysburg Address.
\item \textsuperscript{20} “Purchase of Mount Vernon Cheering Prospects,” \textit{Daily South Carolinian} (Columbia, SC), April 3, 1857. Taken from the \textit{Richmond Enquirer}.
\item This quote may also reference the repeal of the Lex Oppia, a law created in Ancient Rome in 215 BC that restricted a woman’s wealth and her display of wealth. It prevented her from possessing more than a half an ounce of gold and while the Roman senate debated repealing the law the women rallied and beseeched the men to repeal it. A similar appeal was made in the \textit{Daily Morning News} in Savannah, Georgia on March 11, 1858. “We know not where to turn for help. Fathers, husbands! Sons! and brothers! we ask your assistance—and CITIZEN SOLDIERS, who compose the Volunteer Corps of our city and country...we appeal to you! Did ever a soldier’s honor or a soldier’ pride withhold the boon which woman asked?”
\item \textsuperscript{21} Examples include the Kenmore Association in Fredericksburg, VA, the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association in Arlington, VA and the Ladies’ Heritage Association in Tennessee.
\item \textsuperscript{22} William Murtagh, \textit{Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America} (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006) 10.
\end{itemize}
None can shrink more than ourself from individual notoriety or newspaper publicity of names which we do not think absolutely necessary to the transaction of such business with your own sex...We confess our preference for this mode, as more in consonance with southern feelings and manners, and has already been adopted...

Ann Pamela Cunningham avidly avoided using her name when signing advertisements and when she did the newspapers noted the importance of the act; “as we learn by the Richmond papers, she has thrown off her incognita and put her proper name to the address which she signs in behalf of her association.” When rarely done, utilizing a full name, especially that of the leader, provides an added emphasis to the statement being made and helps it resonate strongly with the readers.

Newspapers provided the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association with a method of spreading information and garnering appeal for their cause. The desire of the newspapers to take up the cause in turn elevated it and spread the information further afield. The surest form of communicating the ideas and necessity of participation to the movement was through the newspapers, as handwritten letters and appeals made by person could only reach a limited number of people. Without the newspaper, the women of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association would have experienced the sour taste of defeat.

23 “To the Ladies of the South,” Daily South Carolinian (Columbia, South Carolina), May 19, 1854.
25 One such time, Cunningham’s name appeared in an article discussing her return to South Carolina upon the start of the Civil War. The article spoke of her return to the South and the belief that this action made her a secessionist sympathizer. Cunningham, for the sake of Mount Vernon and the Association, had resolved to remain neutral in the face of the country’s split and she saw this as potentially harmful.

You know my horror of publicity for a lady – of her name appearing in newspapers!
...For the South Carolina editor to throw such a firebrand into our women’s camp was worse than a blunder—it was a crime.

She did not wish to jeopardize the national orientation of the Association, she wished for it to remain political neutral, a sacred spot to be revered not forsaken. In this instance, the newspaper had the potential to hinder the cause, possibly ruin it. “An Appeal for Mount Vernon,” Daily National Intelligencer (Washington D.C.), May 5, 1858.
Susan Pringle Frost.

Because of its devotional, graceful attraction to food and gardens and architecture, Charleston stands for all the principles that make living well both a civic virtue and a standard.
Pat Conroy, *South of Broad*, published 2009

*Aedes mores juraque curat.* She guards her buildings, customs, and laws.
Motto for the city of Charleston, South Carolina
Ann Pamela Cunningham made her first plea to Southern ladies through a Charleston newspaper in the 1850s but the call for preservation in Charleston was not about Charleston. Preservation thoroughly established itself in the city in 1920 when the diligent desire of Susan Pringle Frost and a group of women banded together to protect a beloved mansion of architectural superiority within the city. Before this time, Susan Pringle Frost had been selling real estate and many of the properties were those she had lovingly restored to the height of Charleston’s architectural glory. Her actions displayed a love for the architectural integrity of her city and the culmination of these actions lead to the nation’s first preservation society.

A Charlestonian to the core, Susan P. Frost had blood of the old Southern aristocracy. She spent her life in the Miles-Brewton House, which had sheltered five generations of her ancestors, and filled her with a respect for the, often idealized, days of old that reverberated through family stories. Criticism for preservation tends to revolve around the desire in the earlier period of the movement for the women to protect structures that they have romanticized, discounting any unfavorable history in order to look at the past in the best light. However, it was a necessary starting point and one that has, over the years been rectified in many areas. Frost found herself protecting structures that held no national significance, unlike Cunningham with Mount Vernon, and eventually she found herself as a pioneer in one of the most challenging aspects of preservation, that of protecting urban historic districts from developmental pressure, the area of preservation Ada Louise Huxtable would so adamantly defend in the coming decades.

Susan Pringle Frost spent most of her days as a leader in the numerous social circles in Charleston, all the while breaking many social norms typical of women at the time. She never married.

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26 Preservation in Charleston slowly gained footing by protecting structures in this way, under a “golden haze of memory,” but it slowly evolved an eventually looked beyond the individual structure to the larger urban landscape. It stood at a pivotal moment in the movement and it showcases, within one city, the change between two different forms of preservation, both of which still exist today.

and by many accounts she was the first female real estate agent in the city. She began buying real estate in 1909, restoring the structures and then selling them. Not only did she bend gender stereotypes in the field of real estate but she became a court stenographer for the U.S. Federal District Court in Charleston.\footnote{Stephanie E. Yuhl, \textit{A Golden Haze of Memory} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 10.} She founded and resided as president over the Charleston Equal Suffrage League. During her time involved with women’s suffrage, Frost acquired many of the abilities that would assist her ardently when she undertook preservation. Leading the Suffrage League required Frost to advertise for women’s rights throughout the city in hopes of raising public interest and gaining members, a task in which she utilized the local newspapers and her public speaking skills to accomplish. This recognition of the need for public participation proved particularly useful to her future endeavors in preservation, especially the utilization of the newspaper as a means of communicating and promoting interest.

Her motivation in acquiring, restoring and selling properties was to protect and better downtown Charleston. Charleston’s local newspapers featured many advertisements from Frost proclaiming splendid structures for sale in ideal locations, often listing a few of the more notable architectural features to be found inside. One such advertisement found in the \textit{News and Courier} on February 28, 1920, informed prospective readers that “19 Tradd street [was] now in the process of restoration...Inspect this property while being restored; then return in six weeks and buy it for a home.”\footnote{Susan P. Frost, “Ready Soon,” \textit{News and Courier}, February 28, 1920.} Unlike Ann Cunningham, Frost was no stranger to publicity as her name appeared splashed in the newspaper daily endorsing her blossoming business. Her name, varying in font type and size, appeared at the bottom of every one of her advertisements followed by her business phone number and physical address.\footnote{Though Frost filled the newspaper with her name, endorsing a business with one’s name differed from signing opinionate pieces about the potential pitfalls of the city. When talking about her own personal thoughts, Susan P. Frost tended to downplay any negative views towards her person by stating simply that her ideas may “seem a bit too personal for the public eye” or that “I would not have written this letter in behalf of saving the buildings under discussion had I not been asked to do so.” This humble attitude contrasts sharply with her frank assertion of name in her many advertisements but it harkens back to her genteel upbringing and old Southern customs, which Cunningham herself fell}
The beginning of the preservation movement in Charleston can be tied solidly back to the purchase and subsequent maintenance of the Joseph Manigault house, an action clearly reminiscent of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association. This house is unique among the other structures in Charleston. Not only does the temple gate draw attention but it was the first structure in Charleston to have curved walls, a feature that is readily distinguishable from the east and west facades. Gabriel Manigault, an early American gentleman architect, built the house in 1803 for his brother Joseph. He utilized the Adamesque or Federal style which calls for everything to be balanced, symmetrical, and paired. The late 1910s saw the possible destruction of the house to make way for a garage and gas station. With this potential blight on the landscape of downtown Charleston, a group of women, including Susan P. Frost, strove to protect the structure.

This residence had been purchased by a small number of women who felt ‘it would be an unwarranted piece of vandalism to destroy it as contemplates for a garage and other commercial purposes.’

Purchasing the structure proved to be a financial burden in the long run and part of the land had to be sold in order to continue the upkeep and mortgage payments on the structure. The small Grecian temple gate housed, for a time, tires for the garage that was built on the site. Paid advertisements appeared in the News and Courier decreeing the need to save the residence. One such stated: “THE JOSEPH MANIGAULT HOUSE...WILL BE SOLD FOR TAXES AND MORTGAGES JANUARY 1. Can Charleston really afford to let this house be destroyed?” The saving grace for the house, and to the profound relief of the women working tirelessly to keep up the structure, came in the form of a wealthy benefactress that purchased the property and deeded it to the Charleston Museum.

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31 Other temple structures
32 The style derives from works of Robert Adams and James Adams in England.
34 Paid advertisement, News and Courier, transcript found in the Manigault house papers, SCHS Another, later advertisement, propounded the same message in a similar tone saying: “Winston Churchill said, ‘When within the Manigault House, one forgets the outside world.’
These efforts revolving around the protection of a single structure eventually lead to the formation of an organized group of thirty individuals (twenty-nine of whom were women) who determined the architectural delights of the city were worth protecting from further abuse.\textsuperscript{35} Susan P. Frost established the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (SPOD) in April 1920 and she became the organizations first president.\textsuperscript{36} To readers of the \textit{News and Courier} they laid the foundation for the purpose of the Society:

\begin{quote}
The purpose of the organization is to preserve by purchase of otherwise fine old dwellings in Charleston and its vicinity, the handsome old-time wrought iron work and in general to exert its influence in every way possible to inculcate in the minds of local people such a love of the finest in architecture, homes and workmanship as will cause a general awakening in the minds of the public toward these things, which will result in their permanent preservation and emulation in the future.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Meetings for the group were advertised within the newspaper, calling upon the local citizens to attend the meetings that were held at 20 South Battery, the home of her cousin and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Pringle.

Frost never allowed limited means from preventing her from following her passion of restoring to Charleston the old dignified houses that once proudly lined the streets, which during her time had fallen into a decrepit state of decay. She opened the eyes of her fellow citizens to the overwhelming importance architecture played in the atmosphere of their fine little city. Residents of other cities and states also took notice. A man from Wilmington, Delaware, sent a letter to Frost, as well as dues to become a member of SPOD, which was subsequently published in the paper to bring attention to the larger importance of protecting Charleston.

\begin{quote}
It is a matter, from an architectural standpoint, that interests people of this entire country. Surely no other city has the charm and atmosphere.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} The name for the organization changed in 1957 to reflect the expanded mission to protect all historic sites not just dwellings but Frost chose the original name “to include ‘dwelling’ because as used in the Bible, the word implied a permanent residence passed down from generation to generation.” The name acted as a gentle nod to the way of life familiar to an old-blood Charlestonian. “Rites Set Today for Miss Frost,” \textit{News and Courier}, October 8, 1960.
of Charleston, largely brought about, of course, through these early American houses and, to my way of thinking and not entirely from an artistic standpoint, once these houses are destroyed Charleston would become like any other city of its size and would lose the very thing that makes it stand out beyond any other city of the country.\textsuperscript{38}

The duty to protect the city from an assault to the physical quality no longer affected only Charleston residents should they fail; it would become a stain on the American landscape and a source of shame to those who allowed her to suffer such a travesty.

Frost filled the newspaper with articles about houses for sale, meeting days for the SPOD, but she also presented her opinions to the public about the actions occurring within the city. She vehemently argued against the desecration of spaces she believed to be important to the public and the overall quality of the city. In response to the proposed Battery Drive that was to go around Battery Park at the tip of the Charleston Peninsula, Frost wrote an ardent article to persuade the decision to be changed and the money to be used elsewhere.

\begin{quote}
Almost any city would spend not $80,000 but hundreds of thousands of dollars to make it; we have it, transmitted to us by our fore-fathers of generations past, who “builded better than they knew.” In the name of all that is beautiful and peaceful and soul-satisfying, let us preserve it in all its dignified simplicity; in all earnestness I say this is one spot in Charleston that in my view cannot be improved on; it is a priceless heritage; let us see that it stands for all time a monument to the builders of a past day…\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

In a short opinion article to the editors of the \textit{News and Courier}, she stated simply that “one by one we are destroying our landmarks. When all are gone we will have a mediocre city overrun with ugly modern buildings.”\textsuperscript{40} To claim such a disparaging future for Charleston acted as a reality check for those who valued the quality of life that the quaint city provided.

Communicating her actions and thoughts through the newspaper provided her with a chance to connect to readers and propagate the importance of historic structures to the overall betterment of the

\textsuperscript{40} Susan P. Frost, “Lawyers’ Row,” \textit{News and Courier}, copy from Susan P. Frost vertical file SCHS.
city. She believed that her actions and writings would provide a path on which others would follow; “if it will point the way to others to join us in the fight to preserve the old-time and old-world beauty of Charleston I will not have labored or written in vain.”

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Ada Louise Huxtable.

If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time - a tremendous whack.  

Winston Churchill

Is it not cruel to let our city die by degrees, stripped of all her proud monuments, until there will be nothing left of all her history and beauty to inspire our children? If they are not inspired by the past of our city, where will they find the strength to fight for her future? Americans care about their past, but for short term gain they ignore it and tear down everything that matters. Maybe, with our Bicentennial approaching, this is the moment to take a stand, to reverse the tide, so that we won’t all end up in a uniform world of steel and glass boxes.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, former First Lady and historic preservationist
Those who have read any article by Ada Louise Huxtable can grasp the importance of architecture to the writer. Passion drips from the pages and the words bleed with the feelings thrown behind them. Ada Louise Huxtable believes strongly in what she writes, and she does not pull a punch to prevent hurt feelings. Her words were biting, putting the unredeemable truth (as she saw it) in succinct articles delivered to the everyday man on a silver platter: “Here, read me. Discover the secret wonders of the devolving world.” Ada Louise Huxtable showed New Yorkers that architecture mattered, not only to the individual, but to humanity as a whole. Others have sung her glories, her victories in the field of architectural journalism, but Paul Goldberger said it best in a tribute piece he wrote to her, “She has been the most important figure in communicating the urgency of some kind of belief in the values of the man-made environment in our time.” Through this undeniable love of architecture, Huxtable propagated the preservation movement, whether it lay not-so-silently beneath the text of an article harping the destruction of an irreplaceable old structure or in one blatantly disgracing the poor efforts of the movement. She chastened society for failing to fight for their surroundings; after all it was theirs just as much as it was hers.

A New Yorker through and through, Ada Louise Huxtable grew up on the Upper West Side and spent numerous days of her youth exploring the city that she wrote so fervently about in adulthood. Born in 1921, it was 42 years before Huxtable signed her name to an article as the official architecture critic for the New York Times. She stumbled into the realm of architectural criticism and in regards to being a critic, Ada Louise said, “I never set out to do this. I set out to learn as much about architecture as I could. In other words, you’ve got to have a sense of purpose and interest in something, and that will always lead you somewhere.” With a steamroller and some asphalt, Ada Louise Huxtable paved the way of architectural criticism, setting a precedent for quality work that few could claim to equal, even

less to surpass. She pursued her interests vehemently. After graduating from Hunter College in 1941, Ada Louise worked a while in the furniture department of Bloomingdale’s before pursuing a job at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) where she interacted with Philip Johnson, then head of the Department of Art and Design. Her time spent at the MoMA also allowed her the chance to develop skills and knowledge that would serve her faithfully throughout her career.

Huxtable wrote at a revolutionary time for architecture and preservation, when the buildings going up were just as destructive as the buildings being torn down. New York in the 1960s and 70s measured progress through modernity and new growth, often sacrificing well-constructed, aesthetically pleasing structures for tall, cheap office buildings of expediency. Ada Louise Huxtable strove to make sure that the structures being built did not undermine quality of life, and her demand for quality often lead her down the road of preservation. Old buildings tended to be better constructed and more visually appealing than the shoddy commercial structures appearing throughout New York City at the time, a style she called “Investment Modern.”

That her words still resonate with life after nearly fifty years is a testament to the strength of her writing and the continued importance of architecture in the public dialogue. The critic’s job, according to Huxtable, was to teach the readers to look up, look out beyond the black and white newspaper print, and be a part of the world:

The critic’s role in architecture and urbanism is quite different than in any other field. For one thing, this is a relatively new field in the popular press and a growing one. The function of this broad kind of architectural criticism is educational; it must in many ways fill the gap that our schools have left so conspicuously absent—the yawning chasm between the “educated” man’s perception and understanding of the man-made world around him. Without this, no campaign for better ways of building can succeed.

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44 As an architect Philip Johnson would receive mixed reviews from Huxtable.
Her end goal was always about the people, not the structure. Writing for the *New York Times* allowed Huxtable to present her opinions to a large mass of the city’s population and then some. Architecture is part of the public dialogue today due, in large part, to the efforts of Ada Louise Huxtable.\(^{47}\)

This ability to communicate ideas proficiently presented Huxtable with the unique opportunity of being at the forefront of the preservation movement occurring within New York City. Her call for preservation rang through her articles, though not in so many words. She rallied against the destruction of old buildings with life still left to live, raining shame down upon the citizens of New York for allowing such an atrocity to occur while they went on with their daily lives.

Watch an architectural landmark demolished piece by piece. Be present while a splendid building is reduced to rubble. See the wrecking bars gouge out the fine chateau-style stonework. Hear the gas-powered saws bite into the great beams and rafters. Thrill to destruction. Take home samples. Hurry to the show. On second thought, don’t hurry. There will be many more performances...If it isn’t going to be faced as a public responsibility, it might as well be taken as a public spectacle.\(^{48}\)

Her efforts to bring the public into the battle for better buildings spurred many of her writings about the destruction of the built environment. In the 1960s the tide shifted, presenting the preservation movement in New York with the opportunity for becoming a player in the architectural evolution of the city but as with everything, there was a price.

The saga of Pennsylvania Station, a monolithic structure of travertine and granite built in 1910, remains a blight on the history of a great city. It was a truly massive building that made a nation believe it could be Rome. The desired destruction of such a colossal monument, barely 50 years after its construction, struck home with the citizens of New York. People protested, not only the loss of an aesthetically pleasing building that spoke volumes about the grandeur of the city it stood within, but the

demolition of a building the public viewed as theirs. This mindset stayed with the people of New York, continuously reaffirmed with a simple glance at the proud structure, and it was under this mindset that protesters fought for the survival of the beloved city landmark 56 years later. At the forefront stood Huxtable, pen in hand, lamenting the inability of society to recognize the importance of such a structure but by the time protests started, the future of Penn Station had already been decided.\textsuperscript{49} The fight, however, was no less intense. Architects voiced their opinions, reputable organizations gave weight, and architectural publications, the popular press, and, most obstinate, the \textit{New York Times} provided sound arguments condemning the demolition of such a building. Ada Louise, in her characteristic style, informed the public of the impending tragedy, placing them in the role of accessory to murder, watchers on the sidelines, who through lack of action allowed this misfortune to occur.

\begin{quote}
It’s time we stopped talking about our affluent society. We are an impoverished society. It is a poor society indeed that can’t pay for these amenities, that has no money for anything except expressways to rush people out of our dull and deteriorating cities and that treats land values as the highest morality\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Preservation had already gained momentum in many cities of the country long before the issue of Penn Station arose; however, New York remained exempt, preferring to look progressively toward the future by destroying the past. Some in New York fought for the preservation movement but it was just a whisper among the uproariously chaotic backdrop of an ever changing city. New York City thrived off change and prevented any attempts for preservation to assert itself in an effective way.

In New York the sentiment for preservation is a relatively new thing. The city has never preserved anything. Its nature is to destroy, build and change. New Yorkers are not antiquarians, and that is part of their pride and strength. To be successful in New York, preservation must strike a singular balance with this spirit; even the past must face the future.

\textsuperscript{49} In 1950 Penn Station was operating at a $1.5 million annual loss and the company entered into to talks with the developers of Madison Square Garden. This news did not reach the public until 1960 but by then the air rights to Penn Station had already been sold.

Huxtable presented her understanding of preservation to the public in an article written in 1968 saying, “What preservation is really all about is the retention and active relationship of the buildings of the past to the community’s functioning present. You don’t erase history to get history; a city’s character and quality are a product of continuity.” A city cannot sit stagnantly in the past but must continue to push forward, that, however, does not mean the systematic destruction of any building with, perhaps, one too many layers of patina. Her enthusiasm and passion for reconciling the past with the future provided the still fledgling preservation movement with a voice. Penn Station may have been the sacrificial lamb needed for the preservation movement to gain its footing but the articles written by Ada Louise propelled the idea of saving historic structures to a broader scope of people. Her words sat on coffee tables, counters, and desks throughout New York imbuing the readers with a sense of personal responsibility for the maintenance of their city. When it came to preservation in her beloved New York, Huxtable stated, “It is for substance, style and quality in a city and world that are hard put to provide such commodities today and hardly know how to evaluate them. I am not weeping for the past; I am concerned for the future.”

Huxtable used her undeniable love for New York as common ground between herself and her readers. The New York Times, while a nationally renowned newspaper, is centered in the city and the main readers of more locally centered articles are those who live and breathe New York air. It is infinitely easier to care about what you know. Reading about the efforts of preservation in a city three states away is not the same as reading about the proposed destruction of a building three blocks away, one that you walk by everyday on your way to work. The Kansas vice-regent for the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association found that out the hard way 100 years before. Huxtable used her biting words and the pride of New Yorkers in their city to bring about much needed reform.

When it is good, New York is very, very good. Which is why New Yorkers put up with so much that is bad. When it is good, this is a city of fantastic strength, sophistication and beauty. It is like no other city in time or place. Visitors and even natives rarely use the words “urban character” or “environmental style,” but that is what they are reacting to with awe in the presence of massed, concentrated steel, stone, power and life. It is a quality of urban greatness that may not solve racial or social tension or the human or economic crisis to which a city is prone, but it survives them.53

Pride of place is a factor of immeasurable importance to the successful evolution of a city. The destruction of a city comes when people no longer care about it. Ada Louise tempered her accusations of the poor decisions occurring in the city with ringing words of civic pride.

The preservation movement in America relies heavily on public participation. Without effective means of communication no efforts could come to fruition. Huxtable provided the link between the efforts occurring and the everyday public. She witnessed the changing tide, provided the necessary words to fuel passion in others and reveled in the victories.

On the plus side, there has been a near total reversal of attitudes toward the past. Preservation, the wooly, sentimental cause of those little old ladies in tennis shoes, is now endorsed by astute developers everywhere in an avalanche of imaginative recycling of old structures of diversity and dignity. This is being done with taste, wit, educated judgment and a firm grasp of such esoterica as historical and cultural relevance and urban variety and enrichment. It isn’t just a movement; it’s a mild stampede. I’ve thrown my tennis shoes away.54

Ada Louise provided written commentary on the destruction of Penn Station, she derided the tendency to destroy instead of save, she helped change the mindset of New Yorkers, all to protect a city that was slowly destroying itself. Her words resonate with life today, and will continue to do so until people realize that cities belong to them, not developers, not real estate agents, not money. Until then “we will probably be judged not by the monuments we build but by those we have destroyed.”55

Voice.

A critic writing for the daily press does not deal in immortality. In the classic putdown of his trade, today’s words are for wrapping tomorrow’s fish.

Ada Louise Huxtable, “Huxtable was Here,” 1986

If you were born with the ability to change someone’s perspective or emotions, never waste that gift. It is one of the most powerful gifts God can give—the ability to influence.

Shannon L. Adler, author
Though Huxtable did not view her work as historically important her words still resonate 50 years later just as the efforts of Cunningham and Frost left an undeniable mark on the preservation movement and those who followed after them. Preservation of our cities required a persuasive tongue and a particular passion, an understanding of supporters and the determination to continue long past rejection. These three women tailored their pleas, their assertions to the audience they hoped to convince and their gendered language reflects the constraints placed upon women with regards to respectability and authority in their respective era. Where Ann Cunningham called solely upon the women of her time, Ada Louise Huxtable used masculine terms in an effort to gain the attention of both men and women. Each woman was confined by societal norms and, whether consciously or not, conformed to them. In the mid-19th century, before the outbreak of the Civil War, women had barely begun the move for suffrage. As such, Ann Cunningham was still not considered an equal to man, and her activities, associated often with the domestic realm, were of no interest to men. She emphatically called upon the women of the nation, the women of the North and South and in instances where she asked men for help it was in the aid of their wives, daughters, or sisters. She made the movement a strictly feminine one, occasionally men would offer their assistance, as was the case with Edward Everett, but they were always, and remain to this day, the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association. Being a woman’s enterprise defined the efforts as much as Mount Vernon did.

One hundred years later, Ada Louise Huxtable found herself writing articles for the New York Times about the state of architecture, both good and bad. She did not call upon her fellow women to work for the betterment of architecture; she spoke to everyone and anyone who picked up a copy of the New York Times was subject to her writing. Though she intended her reader to be the residents of New York City, both men and women, she employed gender-specific pronouns, most often masculine, and the word man to speak of society’s accomplishments and actions. It was man who could build nobly,
man who could reach the moon, man who was ennobled by excellence. However, Huxtable’s use of the gender-specific pronoun does not exclude women from her target audience. The use of the generic he has been a long standing tradition in prescriptive grammar. It refers to a person of unknown gender, meant inclusively not exclusively. Likewise, the usage of the word man refers to humanity in general. This style of writing has existed far longer than the attempt to create gender neutral writing and during the mid-20th century, when Huxtable was writing, it was still the traditional form of grammar taught. She differs widely from Cunningham in that she no longer targets just women. She believes it is the responsibility of every person to understand the workings of the built environment.

In between the rhetoric of these two women is the voice of Susan P. Frost who spoke directly to her fellow Charlestonians. She did not often use pronouns or directly incite women to help in her cause; instead her words spoke to Charlestonians, in particular the higher social echelons of the peninsular city, those with the money, time, and the desire to protect the days of old they grew up learning about. As a real estate agent, Frost understood the necessity of appealing to as many people as possible. To function in business, especially one predominantly male, she could not afford to be exclusive. Articles about the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings asked assistance from the local people or the public. Her articles speak of the collective population of Charleston, using we and us to establish her participation in the protection of the city. As a daughter of the aristocratic South, Frost determines her audience to be those of similar standing when using such pronouns.

Their styles of writing differed just as the people they addressed varied but all three women followed similar methods for getting their point across. Most notably, they put the public in a place of prominence and chastened their lack of inaction. All three women strike at pride as a way to garner support and action. The built environment belongs to the people and it is the responsibility of the

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people to prevent the degradation of their public space and heritage. Along with generating a sense of shame in the readers, Cunningham, Frost and Huxtable called upon the publics’ pride; pride in their nation, in their state, and in their city. These two methods strike at the human desire to be better, the want to be the best.
Conclusion.

How will we know it’s us without our past?
Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*, 1939

We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice. We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many. We will revere and obey the City’s laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public’s sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.

The Athenian Oath, c. 4th century BC
How do you make someone care about what you care about? That becomes the fundamental question asked by nearly everyone sometime in their efforts to progress forward in their endeavors. These three women strove, to the best of their ability, to form a community interested in the continuation of society’s physical history. Each had a specific goal in mind, and particular people they intended to reach and through similar means of mass communication, in particular the utilization of the newspaper, these women garnered support and propagated a movement that looks as much at history as it does at the future.

Ann Cunningham, Susan P. Frost and Ada Louise Huxtable are similarly connected through their ideas regarding the preservation of history and determined attitude to see their thoughts to fruition. They each stood at a precipice of change and willingly undertook with fierce determination the task at hand. They forged ahead, leading by example. They acknowledged the problem and vociferously strove to provide a solution. They called for help, and they used shame, pride and the power of voice to compel people to be aware of the past and its importance to the continuation of society into the unknown future. Preservation is not a one man movement. It requires the attention and efforts of a strong foundation of people willing to the push forward ideas with a steady, commanding presence.

They have taught future preservation advocates the importance of diligence, strong voice and the necessity of understanding the audience in promoting thoughts. To make people care you must first present your ideas strongly and concisely and in a way that garners they attention. Cunningham, Frost, and Huxtable used the newspaper, but this tool no longer is the premiere source for effectively communicating to a large population of people, especially as interests have become so specialized. With a variety of media options available, authority of voice and a strong resolution are needed, now more than ever, to continuously fight through the extensive amount of circulated ideas present in the mass media.
Today Charleston is undergoing a series of massive and controversial redevelopment changes that potentially threaten the quality of life residents expect from the city. Over the past year, the proposal for the sleekly modern Clemson building, the redevelopment of Sergeant Jasper Apartments, and the proposed development of the Horizon District have been brought forward. The outcry over these plans shows a city that cares, not for the future, but for the past. Charleston has come to a cusp; it is time for the city to progress forward, to showcase the beauty of its narrow streets and small buildings without subjugating the newer construction to subpar designs.

New buildings in Charleston are nothing special. They all utilize similar building materials, similar design ideas, and a similar contempt for the history of the city they stand in. They provide a flat backdrop that allows the 19th century structure next door stand out. They fill the gaps, provide housing and retail space, but in fifty years they will not be worth saving, they’ll be thrown to the wayside, another new building put in its place. They are the temporary structures of the city, built to provide for as long as their mortgage lasts. They are not worth caring about, but this city is, and the residents know it. In March 2015, the Historic Charleston Foundation and the City of Charleston joined efforts to bring a prominent architect and urban planner, Andres Duany, to Charleston to evaluate the architecture on the peninsula and the efficiency of the Board of Architectural Review (B.A.R.). His week in Charleston marked a pivotal moment; his opinions of the city and advice present Charleston with the opportunity to progress forward without losing the essential spirit of the city. His public lectures provided the community with a chance to fully understand the happenings of a city and the continual growth that must be incurred for it to maintain its vitality and not become a “geriatric monoculture.”58

Duany, in many respects, channels the hard hitting rhetoric of Huxtable. He tells it as it is, no sugar coating needed. Nothing escaped his criticism, from the community to the preservationists, from

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Clemson Architecture School to the Fire Marshall; he even directed a passing criticism for Mayor Riley.\(^{59}\)

He affirmed multiple times that Charleston would be fine without following his suggestions, “Don’t lose any sleep. You’re going to be OK. But you may actually be better if you do think about it.”\(^{60}\) But Charleston does not strive to be simply ok. The beauty of Charleston is the immense pride the residents have in their city; it is what has helped this city flourish and become a top destination in the world. It is this pride, this high level of caring, that requires better out of its built environment but somewhere along the line it got lost in translation. Duany required that people look at their surroundings, all of them. Charleston is not made of only historic buildings, and residents cannot keeping looking to their past and expect to progress forward. Duany reminded people that moving forward is different in every city, and Charleston does not need to follow the trends occurring elsewhere.

Charleson cannot be a net importer of architectural ideas. Charleston has to model its own genetic material, which is considerable and sophisticated. And Charleston has to become an exporter of architectural ideas. The world is fascinated by Charleston. Charleston is the greatest influence of my own work.\(^{61}\)

He felt many of the contemporary buildings in the city would fit perfectly in Atlanta or Charlotte, in other words, they were generic enough to fit in larger Southern cities not known for their architecture.\(^{62}\) Charleston prospers because of its architecture and Duany noted this.

The only brand you have is architecture. You’re backed into your architecture. It’s the way it looks; it’s what it feels like on the streets; it’s extremely unique, which makes the issue of architecture not one more thing, but the thing. It’s the thing.\(^{63}\)

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\(^{60}\) Behre, “Andres Duany unveils.”

\(^{61}\) Robert Behre, “Andres Duany unveils.”

\(^{62}\) Ashley Heffernan, “Miami architect makes building policy suggestions,” Charleston Regional Business Journal, March 17, 2015, http://www.charlestonbusiness.com/news/53982-miami-architect-makes-building-policy-suggestions, “If you start becoming more like Charlotte, you’ve really lost a lot,” he said. “In the future, you will have lost actually an asset that people, other cities, countries, people kill for, and here you have it.”

\(^{63}\) Heffernan, “Miami architect.”
When your city is known for something, you do everything in your power to maintain it. Charleston’s architecture put it on the map and it is what will keep it there.

Making people care about Charleston is not hard, it tends to be ingrained into its residents. Most everyone cares, one way or another, about the city but not everyone actively participates, it cannot be expected. In the coming months, Charleston will undertake one of the largest developmental projects to occur within the historic district of the city since its founding in 1670. The twenty acre waterfront site along the Ashley River provides the city with the unique opportunity to create a vibrant, livable area that not only compliments but enhances the surrounding city. As it stands now, the plan calls for relatively tall office and apartment buildings with numerous parking garages. The project only recently gained major attention, aided by the presence of Andres Duany, and has reached the final stages of approval from the B.A.R. The lack of initiative on the part of the major preservation advocate groups likely stems from the fact that no historic structure is in danger of being demolished for this project. However, this building project threatens the integrity of the entire city and it is the responsibility of the organizations to understand, communicate, and inform the community. Discussions involving the future repercussions of such a massive developmental project need to be had involving the community as it affects their quality and way of life.

Preservation continues to evolve and it is our job as residents of this city to evolve as well. We decide the fate of our environment but that cannot occur without the effort of the community, no singular man or woman, no matter how resolute, can change the world without help. Leaders need to step up and keep the public informed of events occurring through the newspaper, social media, and blogs. Just as those before us, creating an accessible network of communication, of informing the public of the problems occurring has the ability to change the outcome of events. They need to be vocal and use the pride residents of Charleston feel for their city and their desire to be better than other cities as a way to gain attention and make people care about the problems at hand. The audience for preservation
in Charleston can longer be the wealthy residents South of Broad or in Ansonborough, it must be expanded to include anyone with a connection to the city, the college kids, the businessmen, the lower income residents. Taking care of Charleston is not the responsibility of a few but the responsibility of all.

Without a voice the preservation movement would have failed before it even began.

Cunningham, Frost, and Huxtable provided that voice for their respective places and gave the voice to numerous other followers who took upon themselves the mantle these women wore for so long. Cunningham emphatically called upon the women of the nation to take upon themselves the job of protecting a piece of this nation’s heritage. Frost fought to save her beloved city’s architecture, first by herself than with the assistance of the nation’s first community based preservation society. Huxtable utilized her place as an architecture critic at the New York Times to inform people of the beauty, and the pervasive ugliness, that surrounds them every day and demanded they acknowledge the role they play in the development of the city. These women gave voice to an effort and provided examples for those following in their footsteps.

Some will remain ignorant of the ongoing battle to save the past for the betterment of the future. Worse still, some will not care. Many, though, will care. They demand the best out of life, they require the past to flavor the present, and they do not sit idly by as their expectations are unjustly condemned for easy money or unheeded change. It is these people, the Cunninghams, the Frosts, and the Huxtables of the world that prevent the irrevocable defacing of the societies we live in. Through their words and call to arms they demand excellence, not only in the preservation of the past, but from every man who has ever once touched a bit of history.
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