MPS WORKS WITH STATE PRESERVATION OFFICERS TO PRODUCE LANDMARK CONSERVATION REPORT

By Ryan Jackson, MPS ’12

From December 2012 to August 2013, the historic French Quarter house known as Madame John’s Legacy was the site of an intense and cooperative study. This Technical Conservation Study, conducted by the Tulane University Master of Preservation Studies program in partnership with the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation and the Louisiana State Museum, resulted in a 400+ page report that is the most detailed analysis of the revered structure ever produced. The project was funded by grants to the Tulane MPS program in equal amounts by the Department of Interior and the Louisiana State Museum totaling $35,000.

Constructed in 1788 on the foundations of an earlier structure which had burned in the Great Fire of that same year, the house at 632 Dumaine Street more resembles the raised basement cottages which proliferated during the French Colonial era than anything built during the Spanish or American periods (the predominant style today in the old quarter). Not only is it one of the oldest buildings remaining in New Orleans, but it is one of only a handful which represent the French-West Indian building style once common in the nascent city. Its architectural significance cannot be overstated, yet for much of its long history it remained in poor condition, especially the ground floor masonry basement.

Since coming into the ownership of the Louisiana State Museum in 1947, Madame John’s Legacy has undergone no less than four major renovations, including a campaign in 1948 by the revered firm Koch & Wilson. Yet to this day, structural problems persist in the building’s basement level, including severe deterioration of the brick surfaces and extreme, three-dimensional efflorescence. The purpose of the present study was to understand more clearly the root causes of the problems, to make detailed recommendations for mitigating such damage, and to inform future building maintenance.

A number of methods were used to these ends. One project goal was to collect all existing archival information on the building’s basement and history of alterations, and to synthesize it all into a cohesive point of reference. Another major goal was the documentation of current conditions, and to that end every single wall surface in the basement (~120) was photographed, merged, and surveyed using an original key. Each wall surface also was surveyed with regard to historic construction campaigns, which were mapped out with help from the archival synthesis. Moisture sensors were inserted into select walls and beneath the floor, and will measure conditions over the course of a year. Archaeological pits were excavated to further understand the subsurface. Even historic paint schemes on the exterior were analyzed to determine if the current scheme is accurate.

All the above methodologies produced their own sets of short- and long-term recommendations, and the final report discusses in great detail the causes, effects, and potential solutions. The staggering amount of information in the final report, and the conclusions drawn therefrom, would not have been possible without the Project Team, which included John Stubbs, Dorothy Krotzer, Ryan Jackson, Sarahgrace Godwin, Yvette Tyler, and Susan McClamroch from Tulane, Michael Henry (Watson & Henry Architects), Ryan Gray (UNO), Michael Shoriak (Cypress Conservation), Ray Pepi (BCA, Inc.) and Andrew Palewski (Palewski Preservation).
FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear MPS Alumni and Friends,

Since last spring the Master of Preservation Studies program has made further strides in both preservation training and preservation action through its several hands-on assistance initiatives in the New Orleans community. Three projects conducted in the Studio II: Urban Conservation course leveraged further local preservation initiatives: 1 - Historical analysis and recommendations for improved preservation of nine entire block fronts in the Vieux Carré that raised interesting questions about preservation philosophies and permitted interventions since the first organized efforts to conserve the French Quarter in the early 1920s; 2 – Preservation planning for three representative blocks of historic buildings on St. Ann Street between South Claiborne and Villere Street in Faubourg Tremé; and 3 – Historical research and formulation of façade preservation alternatives for the legendary Dew Drop Lounge music heritage site on LaSalle Avenue. For the latter project, the collection for the first time of historic images associated with New Orleans’ most famous historic jazz and blues venue of its kind led to the Dew Drop project receiving a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to the Tulane City Center towards restoration of the building’s façade and further advocacy.

It was a pleasure to see 21 Tulane MPS students graduate last May following a especially memorable life experience -- the commencement speech of His Holiness the Dali Lama with his reassuring message: “Think globally in all our actions.” At TSA’s subsequent graduation ceremony back on campus special citations for Best MPS Thesis and Student Who Served the MPS Program the Most in 2012 were awarded to MaryNell Nolan-Wheatley and Gabrielle Begue, respectively.

Work on refinement of the MPS program and preparation for this Fall’s incoming class of 20 new students occupied much of the summer and it was especially exciting to launch the new school year with such an enthusiastic new class. To our surprise no new incoming students are from New Orleans this year, which may say something about the perceived gradual elevation of program’s profile both nationally and internationally. In any case, the answers behind our outreach catchphrase “Why Tulane? Why New Orleans?” are more clear than ever to all of us associated with the MPS program; this city and state’s unmatched quantity and quality of historical resources to work with and learn from is truly amazing!

I have greatly enjoyed my third year directing the MPS program mainly because many changes and refinements are in place that has permitted me to engage more in community preservation efforts. Assistance to the community on behalf of MPS has ranged from serving on the selection committee for a design firm to build a monument to British soldiers who fell in the Battle of New Orleans to assisting the Tulane Community Center with rethinking development plans for historic Holy Cross School in the Lower Ninth Ward. In my role as private citizen I argued at City Hall for saving Edward Durell Stone’s iconic International Trade Mart building at the foot of Canal Street that now will likely be spared demolition and better incorporated into an improved urban plan for that pivotal point in the city.

The MPS program’s accommodation of change and making a difference are underway. Steady as we go!

Yours,

John H. Stubbs
Favrot Senior Professor of Preservation Practice
Director, Master of Preservation Studies
Mark your calendars for Preservation Matters III: The Economics of Authenticity, to be held April 16-17, 2013.

The Master of Preservation Program will present its third symposium in the Preservation Matters series started by Dean Kenneth Schwartz and former MPS director Eugene Cizek in 2009.

Preservation Matters III
The Economics of Authenticity
How US Cities Have Reversed Decline through Historic Preservation Programs

will be presented in conjunction with the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans in honor of its 40th anniversary in 2014.

The symposium has a smashing lineup of speakers who will discuss dynamic economic development through historic preservation, and future directions:

- Cultural Landscape Foundation President Charles Birnbaum
- Boston Mayor Thomas Menino
- Preservation Economist and author Donovan Rypkema
- University of Sydney Professor and Cultural Valuation Expert David Throsby
- Author and Noted Urbanist Anthony Tung
- Longtime Pittsburgh Preservation Leader Arthur Ziegler

An evening keynote lecture and reception will be held on Wednesday, April 16. The day-long symposium will be held Thursday, April 17, 2014. Both events will take place at The Historic New Orleans Collection.

Urban populations have been declining significantly since 1945 in many if not most cities in the United States, especially in town centers and older neighborhoods. Owing to the national preservation program involving the National Register, rehabilitation tax credits, Main Street, Section 106 review process and other programs as well as state and local efforts, there has been a dramatic reversal of this decline in many cities. However, very few cities have come close to regaining their peak populations; the work remains challenging. More understanding is needed about the success of preservation programs, which unfortunately remain under funded and not always recognized as instruments of revitalization. New Orleans had lost about a quarter of its population since 1960 when Hurricane Katrina hit; the city is a splendid laboratory for examining the economic, social and cultural benefits of historic preservation programs prior to the storm and after.

Out of town guests will be offered special lodging rates at the International House Hotel.

Registration information to follow soon. We hope to see you in April!

FISKE THEATRE REPORT AVAILABLE

MPS ’12 graduates Gabrielle Begue and MaryNell Nolan-Wheatley impressively led the research effort and publication of The Fiske Theatre: A Case Study for the Preservation of Mid-Century Theatres in North Louisiana, a report that advocates careful restoration and National Register designation of this representative small-town theater dating from 1950, a beloved landmark in Oak Grove in northeastern Louisiana. The project was underwritten by a Dean’s Fund for Excellence Award granted to TSA Professor Andrew Liles and John Stubbs.
ALUMNI AND STAFF NEWS

• Elizabeth Burger, '12, has been named the new director of Felicity Redevelopment, Inc. in New Orleans’ Faubourg Lafayette.

• Ann Heslin, ‘01, has started a new non-profit consulting and special events firm, Fabulous Fetes. She was also recently elected to the Louisiana Landmarks Society Board of Trustees.

• Clio and Associates, the preservation consulting firm founded by MPS graduates Beth Jacob, ‘12, and Gabrielle Begue, ‘12, was awarded, this past summer, the bid to author design guidelines for Old Gretna.

• Meagan Pryor, ‘12, is the new Coordinator of the historic Pitot House.

• María Elena Rojas, '01, and Daniel Young-Torquemada, '01, and their colleagues at Hache Uve were awarded with two Best Restoration Project Awards (2012/2013) by the Panamanian Society of Engineers and Architects (SPIA) for the second consecutive year. It marked the first time the jury gave two awards under the same category: they were given to two of the firm’s projects, the Garay Historic House and Clementinas Hotel.

• MPS Director John Stubbs was recently made a Trustee of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. The Tulane School of Architecture is especially pleased that this opportunity will allow John to work more closely with the legacy of America’s most famous architect and the wide circle of friends and supporters of that organization.

• Victor Tomanek, ’12, is spearheading a project, through employer Walter Sedovic Architects, called the “Irvington Historic District,” an attempt to get the northern New York town’s historic downtown on the National Register of Historic Places.

• James Wade, ‘12, is writing a book about the Pitot House as part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Louisiana Landmarks’ rescue of the 18th-century house. Architectural photographer Robert S. Brantley, who most recently collaborated with S. Frederick Starr on the book “Une Belle Maison,” will work with Wade to provide the book’s photographs. It is slated to be out in Fall 2014.

STAY TUNED....

MPS Director John Stubbs and assistant Danielle Del Sol ('11) are working with program friends and advisors to compile and create an online, interactive New Orleans Preservation Timeline documenting the City’s history. It will be debuted at the April 17 Preservation Matters III: The Economics of Authenticity Symposium.

Did you spot us? MPS advertised in the Fall issue of Preservation, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

TULANE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
MASTER OF PRESERVATION STUDIES
New Orleans, Louisiana

architecture.tulane.edu

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J O B A N D I N T E R N S H I P N E W S

• MPS Alumni Leon Geoxavier has alerted us that his firm Walker Parking Associates has several positions for restoration architects open at branches across the country. See the openings here.

• Our favorite preservation job sites: Preservation Directory, HistPres, PreserveNet, National Conference of SHPO, USA Jobs (for positions with the National Park Service and other governmental organizations) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Career Center.

KEEP YOUR FELLOW TULANE PRESERVATION ALUMNI IN THE LOOP!

To submit your news items, job or internship announcements or just to keep in touch, email Danielle Del Sol ('11) at danielle.delsol@gmail.com. Please help us build the Tulane Preservation Alumni Group into an active, helpful resource for all graduates in Preservation Studies!