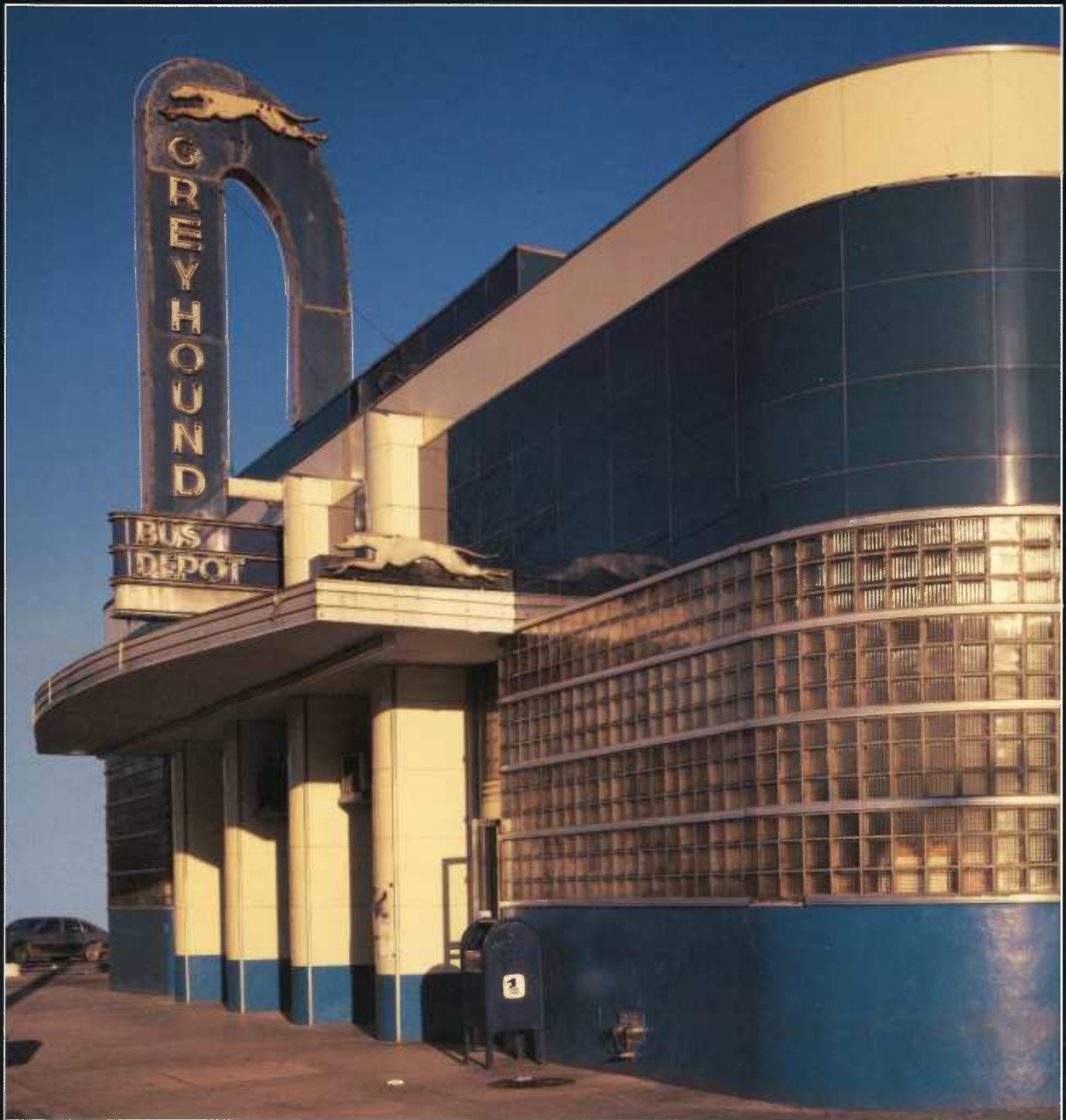
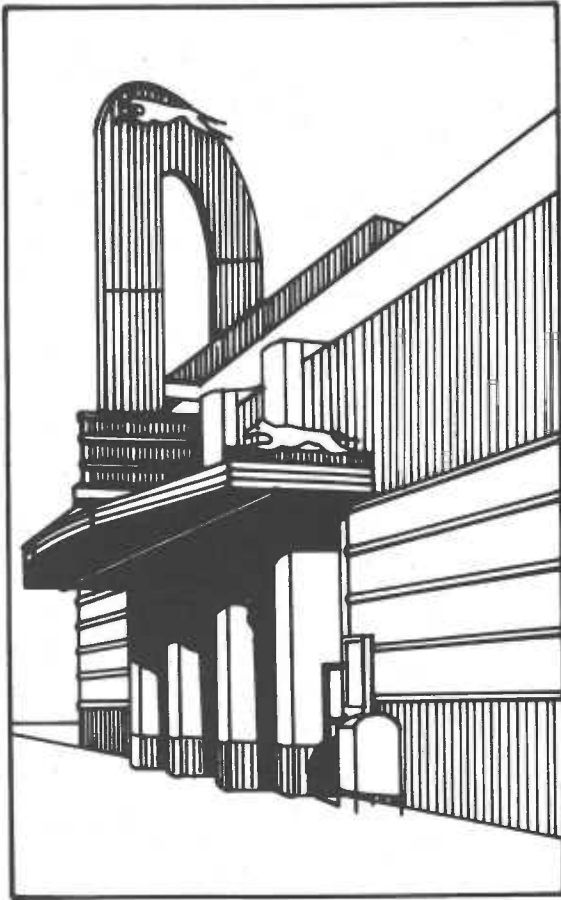


*Preserving
the Recent Past!*





*Preserving the
Recent Past*

Editors

Deborah Slaton

Rebecca A. Shiffer

Historic Preservation Education Foundation
Washington, DC
1995

Copyright © 1995 by Historic Preservation Education Foundation
Washington, DC

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Preserving the recent past / editors, Deborah Slaton, Rebecca A. Shiffer.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Historic preservation—United States. I. Slaton, Deborah, 1954- . II. Shiffer, Rebecca A., 1957-
III. Historic Preservation Education Foundation.

E159.P76 1995

363.6'9—dc20

95-9786

CIP

The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Historic Preservation Education Foundation or of the co-sponsoring organizations of this publication. Neither the Historic Preservation Education Foundation nor the co-sponsoring organizations make any warranty, expressed or implied, or assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, product, or process disclosed, or represent that its use would not infringe upon privately owned rights. Reference to any commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply endorsement or recommendation by the co-sponsoring organizations of this publication.

Portions of *Preserving the Recent Past* are protected by copyright law. Inquiries about reprinting should be addressed to the Historic Preservation Education Foundation, P.O. Box 77160, Washington DC 20013.



Introduction: Preserving the Recent Past

H. Ward Jandl

*Deputy Chief, Preservation Assistance Division
National Park Service
Washington, DC*

Over the past several years, preservationists have finally begun to devote serious attention to the immense challenge of documenting, evaluating, and conserving cultural resources from the twentieth century. This attention occurs not a moment too soon: it is clear that these are the issues that preservation professionals will be grappling with for the remainder of this century and well into the next millennia.

Our predecessors in the preservation movement fought battles to protect remnants from the Victorian age: buildings and neighborhoods that were not widely appreciated in the 1950s and 1960s by the general public - or by many architects and historians, for that matter. While these resources still continue to be at risk, at least today there is a broad body of information and knowledge about their history, significance, and care.

At the present time, we as preservationists are confronting perhaps the greatest challenge of all: how to deal with the twentieth century built environment. It is hard to identify the defining moment when we recognized that it was time to face up to our recent past: was it when Barbara Capitman pushed to have a good chunk of Miami Beach placed on the National Register? Was it when Philip Johnson decided to donate his Glass House to the National Trust for Historic Preservation? Was it when state and local preservationists fought to save Lockefield Gardens in Indianapolis, a public housing project from the 1930s? Was it when the marble veneer of Amoco's highrise headquarters in Chicago began to fail? Or was it when Connecticut's State Historic Preservation officer

requested a determination of National Register eligibility for the Merritt Parkway?

We are faced with defending, documenting, evaluating, and preserving resource types that did not even exist until the middle part of the twentieth century: the shopping mall, the network of highways criss-crossing the country, the curtain wall skyscraper, the housing development, the edge city. What is the history of these new building types and by what criteria should their significance be evaluated? Which of the 2,800 nearly identical Lustron houses constructed around the country between 1948 and 1952 are worthy of preservation and why?

The strategies for protecting and reusing these resources, while owing much to past efforts with eighteenth and nineteenth century structures and neighborhoods, must deal with a scale that is unique to the twentieth century: multi-building, high-rise housing projects, colossal airport hangars, and military bases that are measured in miles not acres. Such strategies must also include a heavy - and particularly creative - dose of education and awareness-building: why should the public care about military structures built during the Cold War? What is so special about mass-produced, prefabrication houses? How can the general public be made aware of the importance of early gas stations, bus terminals, and other roadside architecture?

Enormous challenges also face architectural conservators, engineers, and architects who are beginning to rehabilitate and restore twentieth century resources; the materials in need of

conservation are not only the traditional brick, stone, wood, and iron of yesterday but more complex materials such as plywood, fiberglass, stainless steel, and plastics. Building systems are no longer simple masonry bearing wall construction or wood balloon frame but curtain wall or post-tension concrete. How can these materials and systems be identified and what are the appropriate techniques for repair and replacement? How does one preserve twentieth century materials that may be identified with significant health problems?

The serious study of the recent past is a relatively new phenomenon; there have been few scholarly books on the subject, and articles in professional journals are few and far between. The papers included in this handbook were presented at an in-depth, national conference on preserving the recent past, held in Chicago, 30 March through 1 April 1995. The conference was organized specifically to bring together preservation professionals from North America

and Europe to consider the unique challenges of preserving twentieth century historic resources. The handbook is divided into four broad sections: resource evaluation, preservation and reuse strategies, conservation of twentieth century materials and systems, and history and preservation of curtain wall construction.

There are over sixty essays by academicians, engineers, historians, planners, architectural critics, and preservation practitioners from a variety of disciplines. The subjects cover an extraordinary range of issues, from preserving reinforced concrete at Fallingwater to evaluating contemporary landscape architecture. Some of the papers will challenge the reader to expand the notion of what constitutes an "historic resource"; others provide innovative approaches to resource identification and materials conservation. All are thought-provoking. Together, they greatly expand the body of practical information available to preservation professionals on evaluating and protecting the recent past.