



Preservation

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ELEGY &
RENEWAL

After the storms, the
slow journey back

Alaska's King Island
An Explorer in Newport
The Elusive Wright

Your Trust

Information for Members and Friends of the National Trust For Historic Preservation



Into the Breach

Trust leads tristate hurricane relief effort. || *By Kim O'Connell*

THE CRISIS IN THE GULF COAST following Katrina—compounded only weeks later by Hurricane Rita—was shocking and severe. Thousands of historic structures in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and elsewhere were damaged or destroyed, and whole neighborhoods, and the family histories they embodied, gutted.

If the time immediately following the hurricanes was marked by devastation and disorganization, the sober months since have been devoted to team building and recovery. Drawing on disaster experience that dates to 1989's Hurricane Hugo,

Above left: National Trust President Richard Moe speaks to the press on Sept. 19 during a tour of New Orleans neighborhoods. Above right: With Trust help, Bari Landry and her son Scott have been repairing their house in New Orleans' South Lakeview area.

which pummeled South Carolina, the National Trust has led a multipronged effort to address the crisis, considered by many to be one of the worst cultural catastrophes in American history. Along the Gulf Coast and on Capitol Hill, the Trust is working to funnel resources to the affected areas, partnering with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), preservation groups such as the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans (PRC) and the Mississippi Heritage Trust, state historic preservation offices, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the World Monuments Fund.

National Trust President Richard Moe, Senior Vice President for Programs Peter Brink, and other key staffers made several trips to the region in the weeks after the hurricanes. "We want to work with the government and community

leaders," Moe said after touring the besieged Mississippi coast in October, "to bring maximum resources to bear on preserving as much of the historic character of the coast as possible."

Fundraising was an immediate priority. The Trust quickly established a Hurricane Recovery Fund, with the initial goal, reached in late November, of raising \$1 million. The contributions have included \$200,000 from Goldman Sachs, \$100,000 from the Getty Foundation, \$50,000 from Home and Garden Television (HGTV), \$100,000 from American Express, and many other donations from Trust members and partner organizations.

In addition to fundraising, the Trust is concentrating its recovery efforts in three main areas—systematic assessment of damage to historic properties, legislative advocacy to secure grants and tax credits for rehabilitation, and public education and outreach about the historical significance of the Gulf Coast. To facilitate the process, the Trust opened new field offices in New Orleans and Gulfport, Miss., in cooperation with the PRC and the Mississippi Heritage Trust, respectively.

"We are focused" [Continued on page 8]

[Continued from page 6] on saving as many buildings as possible as well as blocking the unnecessary demolition of historic structures," says David Brown, the Trust's executive vice president. "The goal should be that residents come back home to healthy, vibrant, livable places that retain the character that makes them unique."

IN NEW ORLEANS ALONE, A CITY THAT contains some 37,000 buildings in 20 National Register districts, floodwaters ravaged many areas, from the Lower Ninth Ward to the Pontchartrain Park subdivision. Built in the 1950s, Pontchartrain Park was a tidy enclave of ranch houses, framing a large green lined with oak trees. "The Park," as it is known to residents, resembled other postwar developments but for one detail—it was designed expressly for African Americans during segregation. Over the years, this close-knit community had worked with local preservationists to nominate the neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places. Residents had even planned an autumn picnic to commemorate the Park's 50th anniversary. Then Hurricane Katrina put those plans indefinitely on hold.

On a late-October tour of New Orleans, a team of preservationists found plenty to be both discouraged and heartened about. Piles of debris evinced the city's damaged infrastructure, and the numerous signs offering demolition services signaled its damaged psyche. The group, which included Charleston-based veterans of Hugo, had seen that rush to tear down before. Yet everywhere they went, they also encountered residents eager to learn more about saving and restoring their houses. On one Friday afternoon, for example, the PRC office was crowded with homeowners picking up free tarps and buckets of supplies.

This group was one of the first all-volunteer teams that the Trust sent to the region to assess hurricane damage. More than 1,000 people, with expertise in architecture, engineering, disaster recovery, and community development,



Part of an inspection team, engineer Steve Lucy checks the roof of a commercial building in downtown Lake Charles, La.

responded to the Trust's call to serve on damage assessment teams. Each week, groups of five to six people have been deployed by Mary Ruffin Hanbury in the New Orleans field office and Louis Linden in the Gulfport office, working hand-in-glove with the Trust's southern and Southwest regional offices and local preservationists.

In addition to touring and documenting damage, the assessment teams participate in workshops and outreach programs to educate residents about preservation options. Some volunteers have also worked on FEMA surveys. "We're just trying to get the word out to residents who are coming back that they don't have to tear down, they don't have to rip their plaster walls out," Hanbury says. "We're trying to put together good, diverse teams. In addition to technical expertise, people should have empathy."

The need for such teams is great, and the urgency palpable. In the rush to rebuild, municipal officials have begun to survey buildings throughout the affected areas, red-tagging those they deem unsafe and uninhabitable because of mold, decay, or structural failings. Although not explicitly a condemnation process, these efforts have raised fears that historic structures will be demolished unnecessarily. Already, overzealous firefighters from Chicago have demolished New Orleans' century-old Naval Brigade Hall, which was being renovated when the hurricane hit. As of

early November, the city had surveyed some 71,000 structures, nearly 2,000 of which were red-tagged.

The Trust has also convened assessment teams to help historic districts struck by Hurricane Rita, meeting with local groups in Lake Charles, La., and Beaumont, Tex., the first of several planned assessments. There, too, the groups have tried to cool the heated atmosphere that can lead to rash teardowns. "They have suffered a trauma that everyone can appreciate, and they want to return to some sense of normalcy," says Daniel Carey, director of the Trust's Southwest office in Fort Worth. "But in doing that, people are making spot decisions, with not always the best information. We're trying to bring sense and sensibility to the process, to get people to slow down and think this through. Because obviously these business owners and homeowners were attracted to these resources for a reason." The Trust's National Main Street Center, for its part, is facilitating donations to Gulf Coast Main Street communities and has galvanized its network of more than 1,300 local programs to develop business-to-business assistance to those areas. New Orleans is still the host city for the 2006 National Main Street Conference, as originally planned, but the hurricane forced a change of venue and dates (from April to June).

Although damage to historic districts has been extensive, primarily in Louisiana and Mississippi, local preservationists are quick to note that much has survived. Even in the overwhelmed Ninth Ward of New Orleans, the Holy Cross historic district, famous for its "steamboat houses," largely endured the storm. "Out of the 37,000 buildings in National Register districts, about 8,000 structures suffered from some water damage or complete flooding," says PRC Executive Director Patricia Gay. "That leaves almost 30,000 buildings that did not flood. A lot of buildings survived. But preservationists here—and everywhere—have to look at a city holistically. For a city to be losing so much in population and so many buildings, no matter what era they represent, is a disaster." [Continued on page 10]

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The Trust is working with PRC, the Mississippi Heritage Trust, FEMA, and others to participate in these surveys and ensure that National Register districts, as well as areas that would qualify for the register, are protected to the greatest extent possible. The federal government is required by law to consider the impact of its actions—in this case, funding demolition—on historic properties. In New Orleans, for example, FEMA anticipates that the boundaries of some National Register districts will actually be expanded as a result of ongoing survey work. And Pontchartrain Park, with its collection of well-kept midcentury houses, will likely be designated eligible as a register district.

FEMA's historic preservation office has avowed its commitment to giving municipalities as many alternatives to demolition as possible, including saving the facades or shells of buildings or, in extreme cases, moving them to new locations. "The agency is well aware of its historic preservation responsibilities, and we intend to honor them," says John Ketchum, FEMA's preservation officer. "Ultimately, there is definitely going to be a population of structures that do come down. It would be foolish to say that there won't be adverse effects to historic districts. My primary mission is to ensure that, when demolition goes forth, it's not so wide-scale and doesn't affect the integrity of the district."

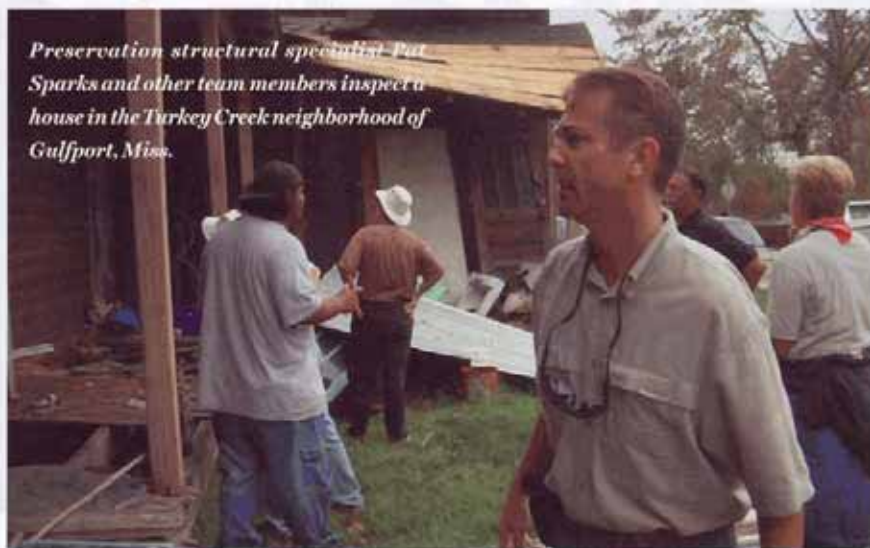
Ketchum is prepared for the outcry even if he does succeed. "I'm sure we're going to take our lumps with some in the preservation community who are adamant that every structure be saved," he says. "But those structures that we're talking about need to have somebody living in them. We're not talking about a theme park, or Colonial Williamsburg. We're talking about a vibrant city."

TO EMPOWER PROPERTY OWNERS TO preserve their own houses, shops, and offices, the National Trust has advanced a three-part legislative proposal to enhance available rehabilitation tools. "I don't see

enough being done at the city or state level to help people come back and deal with their houses," Gay says. "I don't blame them for being concerned about the buildings that they have to demolish. But when you demolish, that is as negative as you can get. We need to take some positive steps to encourage people to come back."

To that end, the Trust's legislative

ures into hurricane relief packages now under consideration. On Nov. 1, Richard Moe and others testified about preservation needs in the Gulf Coast at a hearing before the House Committee on Government Reform's Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census. "It's been absolutely heartbreaking to see so many of our beloved historic landmarks on



Preservation structural specialist Pat Sparks and other team members inspect a house in the Turkey Creek neighborhood of Gulfport, Miss.

proposal calls for the creation of a federal Disaster Relief Historic Homeowner Assistance Tax Credit, which would give homeowners a credit of 30 percent of qualified expenses related to the rehabilitation of historic houses in the Katrina disaster area. In addition, the package advocates a two-year, \$60 million grant program under the federal Historic Preservation Fund, to be used for the preservation, stabilization, and rehabilitation of historic structures in the affected region listed in or eligible for the National Register. Finally, the proposal calls for amendments to the existing preservation tax credit for commercial properties, to make it easier for property owners to have the time and money to complete rehab projects without fear of recapture or foreclosure.

The Trust and its partners, including Preservation Action and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, are urging members of Congress to incorporate these meas-

ures into hurricane relief packages now under consideration. On Nov. 1, Richard Moe and others testified about preservation needs in the Gulf Coast at a hearing before the House Committee on Government Reform's Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census. "It's been absolutely heartbreaking to see so many of our beloved historic landmarks on

the coast gone or in ruins," David Preziosi, executive director of the Mississippi Heritage Trust, testified. "All levels of government must work together to form partnerships. We must not let Katrina take any more historic structures through a lack of effort or coordination." Ignorance is just as insidious a threat. In the torrent of words that followed the disaster, at least one newspaper published an unsubstantiated assertion that as many as 60,000 structures in New Orleans, and countless others elsewhere, would have to be demolished. The Trust has since worked with more than 150 media outlets and Web sites to advance the message that much of the affected area can be restored. HGTV, which is in the third year of its Restore America partnership with the Trust, also directed viewers to the Trust's recovery effort through its Web site and television programming. In November, the Trust and the American Society of Civil Engineers



Trust Me

BY ARNOLD BERKE

September's hurricanes—their blow to Gulf Coast heritage and the ways it can recover—pervaded the **National Preservation Conference** from Sept. 27–Oct. 2 in Portland, Ore. The situation's urgency was underscored from the start, when Trust President **Richard Moe** scrapped his annual report at the opening session to concentrate on the organization's leadership response to the calamity. "It's what we do. This is who we are. This is why we exist," Moe said, outlining Trust teamwork with preservation groups and public officials to assess damage, push for tax credits and other restoration aids, and inform the public as to the value of historic places to reconstruction. (See article on page 6.)

... Held in the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall (née the 1928 Portland Public Theatre), the opener offered contrasting, yet equally pertinent, keynoters. **Rep. Earl Blumenauer** (D-Ore.), formerly a Portland and state legislator, spoke of politics, planning, and the role of national partnerships in hurricane recovery. Commenting also on the national subtext of Proposition 37, the property

rights measure that passed last year (and in October was struck down in court), he warned: "What the forces of darkness have done here in Oregon may be coming to a town near you." California writer and organic farmer **David Mas Masumoto** spun delightfully graphic tales from his books, showing how the conveyor of history—memory and the storytelling it brings on—can be set into motion by something as simple and sensuous as tasting an old-style peach. "I farm memories," he said. "Farmers and those who are engaged in historic preservation, we grow stories."

... **Education panels**—from advocacy to transportation—included some quite impassioned dialogue. At a session on the knotty issue of demolishing one building to restore another, the crowd scrutinized three nonprofits that have made such tradeoffs. The Trust's decision to support razing the Century Building in St. Louis in order to rehab the adjacent Old Post Office fostered an especially fervent exchange. Two of many remarks: "When the National Trust advocates for a project that demolishes an important historic building, that really pulls the rug out from under the preservation community and the city officials who are working hand-in-hand with these groups," said **Adam Light**, a City of San Francisco preservation planner. Emphasizing the role of the post office in revitalizing a larger downtown area, Trust President **Richard Moe** said, "We did our best to make a preservation decision that accomplished a great deal of preservation, even though we suffered the loss of

a good building." Similar quandaries facing the Los Angeles Conservancy and the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois were aired.

... **Tours of town and country** showcased a state where rigorous planning has reinforced the best of both. A shining product of that approach, Portland's light-rail system, prompted an outing to a string of North Portland neighborhoods where the new Yellow Line and the city's renewal agency are working revitalization magic, notably along commercial streets. Other urban treks showed how regional land-use policy, agile local planning, and the enterprise of many an individual have bolstered both downtown and districts nearby. Out beyond the urban growth boundary—the famous sprawl wall that was the focus of its own tour—travelers took in the gorgeous gorge of the Columbia River, towns and landscapes of the Oregon wine country, and one of the all-time wonders of "parkitecture," Timberline Lodge.

... Outside the official to-do list, there were, as always, **serendipitous encounters with people and places**—and the impromptu learning that both impart. One group of conference-goers, on a downtown wander, came across the 1888 Skidmore Fountain, a caryatid-crowned artifact of old Portland. Here was graceful beauty, certainly, but also a reminder of long-ago public-mindedness, of the sort of unabashed civic spirit that could carve boldly into the monument's base: "Good citizens are the riches of a city." What a peach.

cosponsored the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference in New Orleans, presented by AIA in collaboration with the American Planning Association. Richard Moe also spoke at the opening program in an ongoing series on "Building in the Aftermath" at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C.

In the difficult months ahead, Trust staffers plan to participate in other public forums to address the challenges of rebuilding and rehabilitating the Gulf Coast. Already, the organization has reached out to groups such as Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together to forge new partnerships. "Working with our partners, we've got the capacity to

recruit some really great teams, and to put these resources from across the country in the right place to do the most good," Mary Ruffin Hanbury says. "Preservation is about buildings, but it's also about people. We're trying to provide tools that will allow people to return, to make this a vibrant region once again."