

# 2003 annual report



young  
preservationists  
association  
of  
pittsburgh





# Preserving a Sense of Place

Historic preservation is about creating a long-term vision for the future of individual structures, natural amenities, whole neighborhoods, and entire regions. This is what I had in mind when I nominated Murray Hill Avenue (pictured above) in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood to be a historic district in 1999. I was not trying to create just another City historic district; I wanted to create a better future for the street on which I grew up and where my mom still lives. I did not want to see any more demolitions or neglect; I wanted to see a vibrant neighborhood.

By using the City of Pittsburgh's historic preservation code, I helped give new life to an old neighborhood. Today on Murray Hill Avenue, homes sell for far above their appraised value, many have been painstakingly restored, and the cobblestones still provide old-world charm in modern times. This is the essence of historic preservation: civic engagement to create and preserve a special sense of place.

In this report, you'll read about the accomplishments of the Young Preservationists over the past year. We are very proud of what we have done in a short period of time with limited resources. But what excites me the most is the future and the vast opportunities that are before us. I encourage you to share my vision for this organization and help us shape a new future for historic preservation.

*—Dan Holland, Founder and Board Chair*

# The Time is Now

Historic preservation in the Pittsburgh region has suffered some devastating losses in recent years.

- ◆ At the tail-end of 2002, City Council passes a law exempting religious properties from the City's historic preservation code.
- ◆ We lost the Lawrence Paint Building, Wool Company, the Ellis Hotel, and dozens of black history sites including churches.
- ◆ At the end of 2003, City Council votes to re-zone 600+ acres of prime open space overlooking the South Side to allow for a horse racetrack that hasn't yet been approved by the Pennsylvania legislature.
- ◆ Wal-Mart comes to the Waterworks in Aspinwall, sprawl continues unabated throughout the region, we continue to hemorrhage young people, and the city is officially declared "distressed" by Harrisburg. And this is just Pittsburgh. . . .

If you feel "I'm tired of being right—I want to win," then the time is now to develop a plan for preservation victories.

History is our greatest asset. Preservation of the Pittsburgh region's historic resources—its buildings, natural landscapes, and people—is an effective strategy to create vibrant communities, a healthy region, and a sense of hope for the future. This future is embodied in our young people—the next generation of leaders to carry the torch and continue the accomplishments the current generation has struggled to create and maintain. Young Preservationists care about securing preservation victories, not lamenting failures.

What concerns the Young Preservationist is the search for solutions. For every old burned out abandoned building, for every forgotten neighborhood, for every deteriorating historic structure there is an investor, a developer, a real estate agent waiting to transform it into a new future. It's up to us to facilitate that transformation.

Our communities can either be shaped by choice or by chance. If we choose to do nothing, we leave the future of our communities to fate—or, better yet, somebody else's choice, not our own. But if we choose to get involved, learn about our communities, use the democratic tools we have been given—including plain old *voting*—we can create a long-term, sustainable and desirable future for where we live, work, and play.



# 2003

## Accomplishments



To accomplish our mission—the active participation of young people in the preservation of historic resources—the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh seeks to add value to existing preservation efforts by staging educational programs, conducting tours, publishing high-impact research, and directly engaging young people. In 2003, we have achieved these goals in a variety of ways.

We focused first on high-impact research. In May, during National Historic Preservation Week, we published the “Top Ten Best Historic Preservation Opportunities in the Pittsburgh Area.” The research highlighted endangered properties which have a good chance for survival and reuse for prospective developers, investors, and funders. News of the report appeared in a wonderful story written by *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* architecture critic, Patricia Lowry (<http://www.post-gazette.com/lifestyle/20030507youngpres0507fnp3.asp>).



As a result of the Top Ten List, we engaged in several activities to highlight and facilitate the preservation and reuse of these sites. In the fall, the YPA convened a meeting with the Urban League of Pittsburgh, preservation experts, and community leaders to discuss assembling a preservation plan for the B’Nai Israel Synagogue sanctuary, number 9 on our Top Ten List. The *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* carried a story about our efforts ([http://pittsburghlive.com/x/tribune-review/living/s\\_154815.html](http://pittsburghlive.com/x/tribune-review/living/s_154815.html)).

In December, we held a tour of Homestead’s East Eighth Avenue, number 3 on our list, for 50 interested preservationists. The tour highlighted several new businesses and potential investment opportunities in this once-flourishing borough. Homestead has been given new life by its Main Street Program, the Rivers of Steel exhibit in the newly restored Bost Building, several new restaurants, art galleries, and other businesses along the avenue. We hope that our efforts will give new life to these initiatives.



The YPA works in partnership with other organizations to leverage educational impact, which we did with the Local Government Academy in July. More than 50 preservation experts, government officials, historians, and other interested individuals attended a workshop on “Historic Preservation as a Tool for Community Revitalization” in Old Economy Village National Historic District, Beaver County. The program was made possible by a generous grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council.



## Interactive Engagement



The Internet has been a huge asset for the YPA. It is the best way to disseminate information cost-effectively. Our website, [www.youngpreservationists.org](http://www.youngpreservationists.org), was launched in January 2003 and has been generously hosted and maintained by Carnegie Mellon University's Community Connections program. The website provides a portal through which people all over the region and the world can access our resources, share information, link to other preservation programs, and provide feedback to our organization.

Using our website, we launched the first-ever online survey of public opinions about historic preservation. It is an initial attempt to capture popular sentiment about historic preservation. The study will be published in 2004.

The YPA used its collective voice to comment on critical land-use issues and key preservation legislation. The YPA submitted comments to Penn DOT on the Route 28 widening project that urged planners to spare St. Nicholas Church and the Millvale Industrial Park.



The YPA submitted comments to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission—the powerful, non-elected body that is responsible for allocating transportation funds in the region—urging them to adopt smart growth principles that emphasize sound land-use patterns that encourage development of older, historic communities. The YPA also sent letters to state representatives and senators to urge passage of the Historic Tax Credit bills now making their way through the legislature.



# Young Preservationists of the Future

The YPA's long-term vision is based on creating an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared. The initial vision for the organization was mine, but in order to sustain it, others must share and adopt it as their own. It is important that all of us work together to identify opportunities, act on these initiatives, and evaluate results.

In the future, the Young Preservationists are a nimble, cutting-edge network of action-oriented advocates who not only respond to historic preservation challenges, but lead them. United by e-mail, Web, digital photography, GIS mapping, PDAs, and other realtime technologies, we can take preservation to a new level.

We can communicate instantaneously about historic properties; comment electronically on transportation plans, preservation legislation, and zoning changes; we can mount a massive, inexpensive electronic campaign that mobilizes thousands of young people to support a historic designation, save an old building, stop a road, inform elected officials, or to meet up at a local coffee house to strategize about the next big thing.

At the YPA Headquarters of the future, motivated, tech-savvy, civic-minded "preservation soldiers" armed with laptops, PDAs, and digital building coverage maps draft proposals and designs, hunch over architectural models, and crunch numbers; they get local residents fired up about their history and their communities; they engage with key decision makers, such as transportation managers, elected officials, bankers, investors, developers, and real estate agents; and they educate. Papers fly, cell phones ring, faxes buzz, and people actually have *fun* doing meaningful work. We shake things up, ship things out, and make a lasting impact.

Outcomes will be measured on the street and within the organization. Planning, evaluation, re-evaluation, and measurement of results will be paramount. The energy is infectious, but focused. If you can't feel the energy, you won't see the results.



# Our Common Bond

Preservation's enemies? Sprawl. Communities without plans. Vacant land and abandoned buildings. Endangered properties. Research with no action plan. Uncoordinated efforts. Lack of participation. Ignorance. Isolation. Apathy.

These are not barriers but our greatest opportunities. We can't afford to sit idle and watch our region deteriorate. We must work creatively and collectively to connect disparate communities to the larger mission.

Preservation opportunities abound in the Pittsburgh area. African American history remains at risk twelve years after the completion of the *African American Sites Survey of Allegheny County*, which documented more than 150 locations important to African Americans in just one county. Yet, several National Register-eligible properties have been demolished. What African American historic resources exist in other counties, and how many of these are threatened?

The preservation community in southwestern Pennsylvania remains fractured, rarely communicating across county lines, and sometimes rarely across the street. Who is coordinating these connections? What about a common calendar of preservation events?

The preservation field cannot operate in a silo and ignore similar organizations working on parallel paths, such as environmental organizations, affordable housing groups, and community development leaders. Where's the intersection? Isn't the preservation field concerned about environmental preservation too?

There are no lack of preservation initiatives to pursue. By working jointly across the region and across disciplines, we can begin to make historic preservation less of a fringe issue and more of a mainstream planning tool. Victory is in our grasp.



# Behind the Scenes

While the YPA looks ahead, we must take the time to honor those who have supported the organization from its inception. The YPA is no accident. We are grateful to many people for the early success of the Young Preservationists.

## Meet the Board

First and foremost, I must thank our valiant Board of Directors, who have persevered for the better part of the year as we haggled through organizational minutiae, hashed out crazy ideas, and forged a strategic direction. But it was their dedication to the mission and selfless devotion to historic preservation that led to the success of our research, programs, and special events.

Before I introduce the Board, I want to summarize what kind of crazy nuts these people truly are. We have people from all over the region with a variety of backgrounds, interests, and tastes. Their preservation issues of concern include sprawl, African American history, abandonment of family homesteads, brownfield reuse, WPA structures, and rural preservation.

But their tastes sure are strange. For instance, when asked what their favorite food is, several wrote, “seafood,” “ice cream,” “pasta with broccoli,” and “my next meal.” *“My next meal”?*

It gets better. When asked what their vices are, they replied, “Sitting in the sun without SPF 30,” “pack rat,” “obsessive list making,” “napping/chocolate,” and three answered “procrastination.” Great. Just what I need on a Board!

So, there you have it. The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh is really comprised of a bunch of chocolate ice cream-eating pack-rat procrastinators who love to nap in the sun without any skin protection. *What’s wrong with these people!*





The YPA Board includes, in alphabetical order:


- ◆ **Lee Ann Antol**, Secretary
- ◆ **Rachel Colker**
- ◆ **Kemo Crawford**
- ◆ **Colin Kelley**
- ◆ **Dan Holland**, *Founder and Chair*
- ◆ **Jeff Gernert**
- ◆ **Deborah Gross**, *Vice Chair*
- ◆ **Tracy Montarti**
- ◆ **Matthew Ragan**
- ◆ **Nancy Schaefer**
- ◆ **Sean Simmons**
- ◆ **Doug Skowron**
- ◆ **Chloe Velasquez**, *Treasurer*

Thankfully, I won't identify which ones have which vice or favorite food. Without their creativity, honesty, and diehard work ethic, the Young Preservationists would not have accomplished so much this year.

### **Meet the Advisory Committee**

The YPA also has an Advisory Committee, which is still in development. Here are the brave souls who have lent their name to our organization and will provide strategic oversight of our activities.

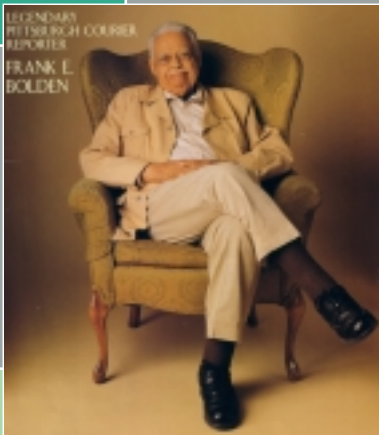
- ◆ **Lu Donnelly**, Historic Preservation Consultant, Pittsburgh;
- ◆ **Kim Faulk-MacArthur**, Carnegie Mellon University's Community Connections Project, Pittsburgh;
- ◆ **Dr. Laurence Glasco**, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh;
- ◆ **Randy Harris**, Neighborhood Preservation & Community Development Consultant, Mt. Joy, Pa.;
- ◆ **Stanley Lowe**, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and National Trust for Historic Preservation, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.;
- ◆ **Jim Matthews**, National City Bank of Pennsylvania;
- ◆ **Dr. Rob Ruck**, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh;
- ◆ **John Stephen**, Historic Preservation Consultant, Pittsburgh; and
- ◆ **Richard Taylor**, CEO, Macedonia Development Corporation, Pittsburgh.



In addition to our governing bodies, there are several people and organizations that deserve recognition:

- ◆ **John Barrett**, Local Government Academy
- ◆ **Brian Britza**, Steel Valley Arts Council
- ◆ **Scott Brown**, Citizens Bank
- ◆ **Elisa Cavalier**, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- ◆ **Jean Cutler**, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
- ◆ **George DeBolt**, DeBolt Transportation
- ◆ **Janis L. Dofner**, Steel Industry Heritage Corporation
- ◆ **Dr. Gail Edwards**, Urban League of Pittsburgh
- ◆ **Adrian Fine**, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- ◆ **Ruben and Helen Fingold**, 90-something Young Preservationists
- ◆ **Friendship Development Associates**
- ◆ **Pat French**, Bulgarian Macedonian Cultural Education Center
- ◆ **Mona Generette**, Dollar Bank
- ◆ **Donna Holdorf**, National Road Heritage Corridor
- ◆ **Dena Holland**, Dan Holland's Mom
- ◆ **Gary Jackson**, Virtuality
- ◆ **Michel Lefevre**, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
- ◆ **Dr. David Lewis**, Carnegie Mellon University
- ◆ **Stanley Lowe**, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation
- ◆ **Richard Moe**, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- ◆ **Muriel Nuttall**, Fayette Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ **Steven Paul**, Homestead Main Street Manager
- ◆ **Pennsylvania Humanities Council**
- ◆ **Mark Pinsky**, National Community Capital Association
- ◆ **Brownsville Mayor Norma Ryan**
- ◆ **Susan Shearer**, Preservation Pennsylvania
- ◆ **Jonnet Solomon**
- ◆ **Kasia Sudol**, Dan Holland's Wife
- ◆ **Dr. Joel Tarr**, Carnegie Mellon University
- ◆ **John Taylor**, National Community Reinvestment Coalition
- ◆ **Jason Wells**, National City Bank of Pennsylvania
- ◆ **Arthur Ziegler**, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

# Giving Life to History



A special thanks and dedication goes out to Mr. Frank Bolden, the esteemed former editor of the Pittsburgh Courier who died this fall. He would have been 91 in December.

In 1994, I had the good fortune of working with Mr. Bolden and the folks at the Centre Avenue YMCA to dedicate the building as only the third African American historic landmark in the City of Pittsburgh [pictured below]. To Mr. Bolden, the Centre Avenue Y was the most historically significant building to African Americans.

Mr. Bolden was not only an encyclopedia of information about African American history, he could make you laugh till it hurt.

"The only thing I've written lately is my will," Mr. Bolden told *Pitt Magazine* in September 1999. "And it says one thing: that my hearse is to be the last one in line because I don't want anyone talking behind my back."

Well, there's plenty of talk about Mr. Bolden after he's gone—but it's all good! More than anything, Frank Bolden was an inspiration to me and many others as well. We'll miss you, Frank.





# Success Begins With You

Success for the Young Preservationists will depend on how motivated you are to get involved. Talk up the organization. Write letters to elected officials, comment on regional transportation plans, submit your thoughts on county-wide comprehensive plans, speak up at local zoning and planning hearings, nominate structures to be historic landmarks, support Main Street communities, visit old house museums, and participate in local community meetings.

See.

Listen.

Engage.

As Members of the YPA, you will be entitled to preservation updates and research, learn about hearing and meeting notices, be provided discounts on tours and other events, and given the ability to engage with like-minded preservationists. When we speak with many voices, our message gets heard.

You are encouraged to join the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh and help us give life to history.