

**Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation  
30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting  
Montréal, 31 May 2008**

**On the Founding and Early Years of the Alliance  
Remarks by Susan Buggey**

Good afternoon! I hope everyone is enjoying our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting. As one of the founders, I am very happy to be sharing it with you here in Montréal. For the next few minutes I want to look back at the early years of the Alliance.

Thirty years ago, when the Alliance was founded, landscape preservation was a little known field. Attention to the landscape had traditionally focused on the natural rather than the cultural landscape. There was emerging interest and recognition that historic preservation involved more than architectural conservation. There were several landscape initiatives underway in Parks Canada, the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. But much landscape treatment was simply cosmetic, tacked on as building conservation neared completion. I know that that was 30 years ago, but it was only 30 years ago.

The Alliance had its origins in the 1977 meeting of the Association for Preservation Technology (APT) in Cleveland, Ohio. A number of presentations related to landscape, but they were not presented in a landscape framework. There were also landscape tours, but the perspective was that of art and architectural history, not landscape values. While we waited in a long line for the buffet dinner, a few of us determined to give a voice to a landscape perspective. Next morning Tom Kane, Bob Harvey, Bill Tishler and I skipped the scheduled sessions and conceived the idea which became the Alliance.

In June 1978 20 invited participants from Canada and the United States met for a symposium on landscape preservation at New Harmony, Indiana. New Harmony was the site of two of America's most important social experiments: the Harmony Society's communal settlement in 1814 led by George Rapp and Robert Owen's "Community of Equality" with the "Boat Load of Knowledge" arriving in 1824. The community was an important intellectual centre before the Civil War. Tom Kane's work at New Harmony – and his connection there with Jane Owen and the theologian Paul Tillich from the early 1970s – inspired the initiative that led to the founding of the Alliance.

Tom was a landscape architect in private practice in Pleasantville, New York. His activities included service as chair of an early ASLA committee on historic resources. He knew the Washington network interested in historic preservation and open to historic landscapes preservation. He made arrangements for our initial meeting at

New Harmony and for the National Endowment for the Humanities grant that funded it. Camille Fife, our past president, was public relations officer at New Harmony at the time and greeted us there.

Tom Kane was the heart and soul of the early Alliance. His vision was of an extended family that needs to keep in touch with each other and of a think tank that could influence the future of our collective landscape. I remember well how he loved to tell a story. When we returned to New Harmony for our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1988, he led us on a mystical midnight ramble around the site he knew and loved so well. Tom died in 1995; his wife, Judith, and daughter Rachel continued his passionate interest in the landscape through Perennial Pleasures Nursery. The Alliance visited there during its 1996 meeting in Vermont and planted a tree in memory of Tom. His son Barnabas served on the Alliance board of directors for several years.

The deliberate intent of our first meeting was to create a forum for individuals who felt an urgency to talk about what was important in the emerging area of landscape preservation. We talked of calling ourselves a “Committee of Correspondence for Historic Landscape Preservation” (after the American Revolutionary groups intent on advancing their mutual interests), but settled on forming “an informal group of correspondents known as the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation”.<sup>1</sup> We wanted to come together to explore approaches and ideas in landscape preservation informally and off the record.

The Alliance was not to be another organization; we would use the journals and newsletters of existing organizations in our respective fields to publish information about landscape preservation. For example, the landscape issue of the *APT Bulletin* in 1979 and six subsequent landscape issues of the *Bulletin* were all guest-edited by Alliance members. We published proceedings of that first meeting in New Harmony and distributed 500 copies across Canada and the United States, with a few in Europe and Australia. Our *Alliance Newsletter* began in 1989, with Shary Berg as editor.

One of the defining characteristics of the Alliance from the beginning was its interdisciplinary character. Participants included historians, archaeologists, geographers, architects and a lawyer. About half were landscape architects. We were primarily educators and professionals working in government heritage programs, with a few from private practice, selected in part for our interest in the interdisciplinary nature of landscape preservation. Many discovered in that first meeting that they were not alone in efforts to conserve the rural landscape.

Dr. Albert Fein was the mentor of the early Alliance – its intellectual and inspirational guide in charting its course as an organization. As an urban historian,

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<sup>1</sup> Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation, *New Harmony Symposium on Landscape Preservation June 9-12, 1978. Report* (Ottawa, Ontario, 1979), 27

his interests in historic landscapes were first expressed in his study of Frederick Law Olmsted. His active role in the founding of the National Association for Olmsted Parks and in the master plan for Prospect Park, Brooklyn carried his interests in Olmsted to the practical level of historic preservation at a significant stage in this emerging field. When he died in 1990, the Alliance remembered him by planting a tree in Prospect Park.

Founder William H. Tishler was organizer and host of the second Alliance meeting at The Clearing, Jens Jensen's home in Door County, Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup> Bill himself is a native of Door County. He served most of his career as professor of landscape preservation at the University of Wisconsin – Madison and is now emeritus. Through Old World Wisconsin, he was engaged with the study and documentation of rural historic landscapes before they became initiatives of the National Trust or the National Park Service. His passion was stovewood buildings. He worked closely with his UW-M colleague geographer Arnie Alanen. Both have been long-term Alliance board members. Some of you may know Bill from two books he edited: *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places*<sup>3</sup> and *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*.<sup>4</sup>

In early years many of us saw education as a key instrument for building awareness, understanding and support for landscape preservation. In 1980, led by founder Robert R. Harvey, we delivered a three-day course at Williamsburg: Tools and Techniques of Landscape Preservation. It involved more than 50 participants. A native of Iowa, Bob was also organizer and host of the fourth Alliance conference at the Amana Colonies in 1981. Tim and Gennie Keller, who did substantial planning work there, were also active Alliance members. A true life-long learner, Bob spent almost his whole career as professor of landscape architecture at Iowa State University and is now emeritus. He is renowned in the Alliance for his outstanding book collection on history and conservation of landscapes and for his phenomenal slide collection. He sincerely regrets not being with us here today.

In the early years, interests of the Alliance were closely attuned with developments in the emerging field of landscape preservation. Besides education and publications, rural conservation was a core interest that involved a number of us in our working lives. Our meeting in Cazenovia, NY in 1982 was at one of the Trust's early rural conservation pilot projects. Sam Stokes, who led the initiative at the Trust, was an active member of the Alliance in these years.

*New Directions in Rural Preservation*,<sup>5</sup> edited by Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette J. Lee, had already been published. You may know Bob Stipe better for his later

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<sup>2</sup> William H. Tishler and Susan Buggiey, eds., Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: Proceedings From The Clearing and Williamsburg (Baton Rouge: Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation, Inc., 1983), 113 pp.

<sup>3</sup> [Washington DC]: National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Society of Landscape Architects: The Preservation Press, 1989

<sup>4</sup> University of Illinois Press, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980

edited works: *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage*<sup>6</sup> and *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*.<sup>7</sup> While trained in economics, law and urban planning, Stipe was dedicated to historic preservation. A professor in the School of Design at North Carolina State University from 1976-89, he was internationally recognized for his leadership and expertise in historic preservation and especially its legislation. He guided the Alliance in its formal and legal establishment as an organization.

1983 saw our first meeting in Canada, at Perth in eastern Ontario, organized by John J. Stewart. John was the leading figure in landscape conservation in Canada at the time and an active Alliance member. By then, he was Heritage Canada's coordinator for the Main Street program in Canada, at Perth. That year also saw publication of Robert Melnick's Rural Historic Districts study for the National Park Service<sup>8</sup> and, shortly after, Ian Firth's seminal study on natural factors in rural landscapes.<sup>9</sup>

As you have seen in this meeting, the Alliance remains a vibrant interdisciplinary group concerned about contemporary issues and directions in landscape preservation and in the roles of landscape education and communication in building awareness, understanding and support for landscapes in a challenging and rapidly changing world. Let me close with Hugh Miller's Family Tree of Historic Landscape Preservation,<sup>10</sup> which illustrates the complexity of players involved in the field at the time of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998.

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<sup>6</sup> With Antoinette J. Lee. Washington DC: US/ICOMOS, 1987

<sup>7</sup> Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003

<sup>8</sup> Robert Z. Melnick with Daniel Spohn and Emma Jane Saxe, *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System* (Washington DC: USDI, NPS, 1984)

<sup>9</sup> Ian Firth, *Biotic Cultural Resources: Management Considerations for Historic Districts in the National Park System, Southeast Region* (Atlanta GA: USDI, NPS, 1985)

<sup>10</sup> Hugh C. Miller, "The Family Tree of Historic Landscape Preservation: Encouraging Dialogues about Shared Relationships", *APT Bulletin* 30:1 (1999), 6-7