

The \$24,000 Question -Restoration, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Conservation, Preservation??

After a month of readings and discussions, more questions than before! But at least they are based on more knowledge of the field. Reading the primary source works of Le Duc and Ruskin, the two extremes in views on preservation from the 19th century as well as other more current writings. Our assignment is to pick a building that has been restored in the last five years and do a series of four papers on the intervention. The first discusses the intervention and how it affected the structure's value as a relic. The second is to compare how Le Duc and Ruskin would view the intervention. The third and fourth is on how the structure was viewed by the community before and after the work.

Ellicott City Colored School Restoration

I chose the Ellicott City Colored School Restoration as my project. Got all the information I needed from newspaper files at the Howard County Historical Society and then from Sylvia Cook-Martin. After completing the first paper, all shared by posting on the bulletin board. It was fascinating to read the other papers. Most were on big projects, movie houses, public buildings, historic house museums, etc. Everyone writes very well. The range of interventions was covered. One was a complete reconstruction, one just a preservation, most were a combination of some restoration, some preservation, and in some cases, some reconstruction,

I think the comparison with ECCS is interesting, which is why I picked it. I want to stay focused on the area of African American preservation. I was having some difficulty coming up with the topic for the 20-page term paper in this area. In the first phone call, Richard asked for my topic and I picked the changing interpretation of presentations of existing house museums to incorporate African American history. He wanted me to concentrate on the why of the changes and political forces. After some initial investigation, I didn't think I could get a 20-page paper on this, so by the second call discussed with him a new topic and settled upon the role of community groups in the preservation of African American heritage in Maryland. He recommended I limit it to a geographic area such as Central Maryland and time period. I feel better now about being able to produce a paper on the subject.

The calls with Richard are challenging. He wants your opinion on the preservation issues, but you have to be able to back it up logically. My problem is that I waffle on most issues. I can see both sides and don't really know which is "right." Is it better to almost totally rebuild a building or just preserve its memory? Is a reconstructed building a lie, a fake, wrong, if it brings more people to be interested in history? Is it worth preserving just because it's old?? Etc Etc.