

The preservation of the Pete French Round Barn has in turn served as a catalyst to produce a field school that will give students the tools to preserve other resources in the future.

### References

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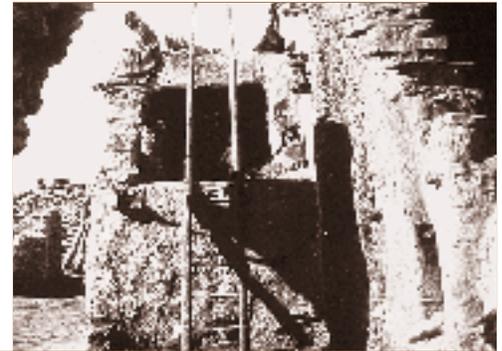
## HABS Drawings

Prior to any restoration work on the barn, it was decided that it would be a good educational exercise to document the building in an "as is" condition. Before any restoration it is appropriate to record the current condition; however, there is rarely time and money to do anything more than limited photography. Here is where university partnerships play an important role—they have the skilled labor pool, accompanied by low costs, to tackle such a job.

Armed with a \$600 grant from the SHPO, a group of eight students from the University of Oregon spent four weekends measuring every nook and cranny of the barn to the nearest 1/8"—no small task given the enormous irregularities of the vernacular structure. The group conformed to Historic American Building Survey (HABS) standards and is producing a highly accurate set of ink-on-mylar drawings. The group plans on entering them in this year's Peterson Prize competition, a contest for the best HABS drawings by a student group.

Leland M. Roth

## Living Architecture Differing Native and Anglo Perceptions of Preservation



*Walpi Kiva.*

Historic preservation might seem straightforward—the retention, restoration, or rehabilitation of a building important to a people's culture. All too frequently, such Western values regarding preservation and restoration are assumed by those in positions of power to be absolute and universal. This has been most especially the case with regard to preservation of Native American artifacts and sites. Anglo-American society and its government officials—whether local, state, or federal—have a centuries-old tradition of assuming that they know best. Native peoples, presumed to be ignorant and uncultured, were given little or no voice in the retention and preservation of their cultural arti-

facts. The problem was that their perception of what needed to be done was entirely different from that of Anglo administrators and officials.

A person's reaction to a problem, or one's answer to a question, all depend on the person's perspective. And a person's point of view is shaped by experience, background, training, even the way a person was raised. The Native American world is not the same world as that perceived by the typical Euro-American or anyone born into and brought up in conventional Western culture. Grasping the profundity of this difference is crucial to understanding Native building traditions.

Since initial contact, Euro-Americans have vigorously and unceasingly tried to make over the Native peoples in their own image. Children six or

seven years of age were removed from their parents and extended families and transported to the Carlisle School in central Pennsylvania or similar boarding schools, they were stripped of their familiar traditional clothes, their hair was cut off, and forbidden to speak their native language they were forced, under penalty of severe corporal punishment, to conform to the white man's notion of what a human being ought to be. One official insisted that it was necessary to kill the Indian to save the man. Similarly, wherever possible, Native peoples were forbidden to build in their ancestral

*Corn dance, Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico. Courtesy Library of Congress.*



ways, in which they used materials and forms shaped over centuries, adapting their structures to setting, climate, ritual, and a relatively non-destructive way of living on the land. After the Euro-Americans swept over them, they had to learn to live in square, white man's houses, bereft of any spiritual meaning for them—houses that were, for them, empty, lifeless, dead architecture.

I have introduced the adjective “spiritual” with respect to Native ancestral architecture, and perhaps of all other concepts this is the most crucial; it distinguishes most importantly the Native view of the world as distinct from the conventional Western or Euro-American view.

The Native world is alive with spiritual presence; all things are alive and bound together in a complex network of connections. Among the hundreds of tribes and nations, the concept of the circle of life and of the interconnectedness of all beings and things surfaces again and again.

Euro-Americans tend to sharply differentiate between an object that is symbolic and that which it signifies, so that the symbol is abstracted and hence intellectually and spiritually removed

from what it signifies. In the Native view, the object itself is both thing and essence. There is no distinction equivalent to that in the Anglo-American world between a utilitarian tool and a valued work of art. In the Native view, a pipe or a rattle or a medicine bag or a dwelling are all equally sacramental; the tool is an object of value spiritually empowered to do the work it must do. Similarly, the house is spiritually empowered to do the work it must do—to nurture, protect, and heal.

One good example is the Navajo hogan, a physical embodiment of the Blessingway song ritual which recounts the perfect harmony incorporated in the creation of the world. Built in the form of a rough circle, the hogan embodies the essence of Navajo spirituality and opens its door to the east to greet the rising sun. The Blessingway song-ceremony—which begins with the creation story and recounts how first holy people were given instructions on how to build the original hogan—is a song of healing and restorative powers. To have any therapeutic effect it must be conducted within a traditional and ritually-consecrated hogan.

There is very little sense of spirituality in the way most Euro-Americans customarily value their landscapes or build their structures. Indeed, in the Western view of things no piece of land is particularly sacred. In contrast, in the Native view, the landscape itself, through its mere existence and by its very inherent character, may be a sacred realm, a nexus of power that has no equivalent in the modern Western notion of things. In Western language it is customary to speak of “unimproved” landscapes, as if any human construction on the land is by definition making the landscape better. Nature, in this view, is inherently deficient. In the Native view, the introduction of any man-made alteration whatsoever may vitiate or destroy that power.

The Western or Euro-American view esteems the rights and privileges of the individual, and the absolute private possession of things and land, as

*Snake Rock and kiva, Walpi Pueblo, Hopi, AZ, c. 1895. Photo by John K. Hillers, courtesy American Research Collection, Museum of New Mexico.*



## Thoughts on Mt. Shasta

Michelle A. Schmitter and Leland M. Roth

Mt. Shasta from the west. Photo by Tim McCoy.

A story concerning the Mt. Shasta Historic District in the State of California appeared in the February-March 1995 issue of *Preservation News* which included a compelling illustration of differences between Native American and Euro-American perceptions and values. An avalanche destroyed the Mount Shasta Ski Bowl facility in 1978, and in the years since there has been discussion of rebuilding the skiing facility in a safer area. Local Native Americans protested, for the site selected by state and federal officials was an area held sacred by local Native peoples and used since time immemorial for ceremonial purposes. Forest Service employees then examined the proposed site; finding no archaeological or physical evidence of Native American occupation, they concluded that no historic properties were in danger. Native American groups insisted the issue be reexamined. The matter is still in dispute today, and although the Forest Service has modified its position and indicated it hoped to designate the mountain as a historic property, individual private Anglo property owners have objected. Their spokesman, a real estate developer from the town of Mount Shasta, has said “we feel that a designation based on mythology and cosmology, without tangible historic objects, is inappropriate....” In other words, if Indians didn’t build there, then the place is not sacred, a millennium of oral tradition to the contrary notwithstanding. On the 18th of January 1995, Representative Wally Herger (R-CA) introduced a bill in the House which seeks to amend the National Historic Preservation Act. The bill aims to prohibit the inclusion of certain sites on the National Register which do not contain artifacts or other physical evidence of human activity that have unique significance in history or prehistory. In addition, the bill specifically seeks to prohibit the designation of Mt. Shasta. Resolution of the controversy over the March 11, 1994, determination confirming eligibility of the Mt. Shasta Historic District as a traditional cultural property (under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) will prove significant in setting a precedent for defining intangible Native American cultural values in respect to the National Register of Historic Places. The *National Register Bulletin* 38 states that the traditional cultural signifi-



cance of a historic property is “derived from the role the property plays in a community’s historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices.” For example, “a location associated with the traditional beliefs of a Native American group about its origins, its cultural history, or the nature of the world; and a location where Native American religious practitioners have historically gone, and are known or thought to go today, to perform ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice.”

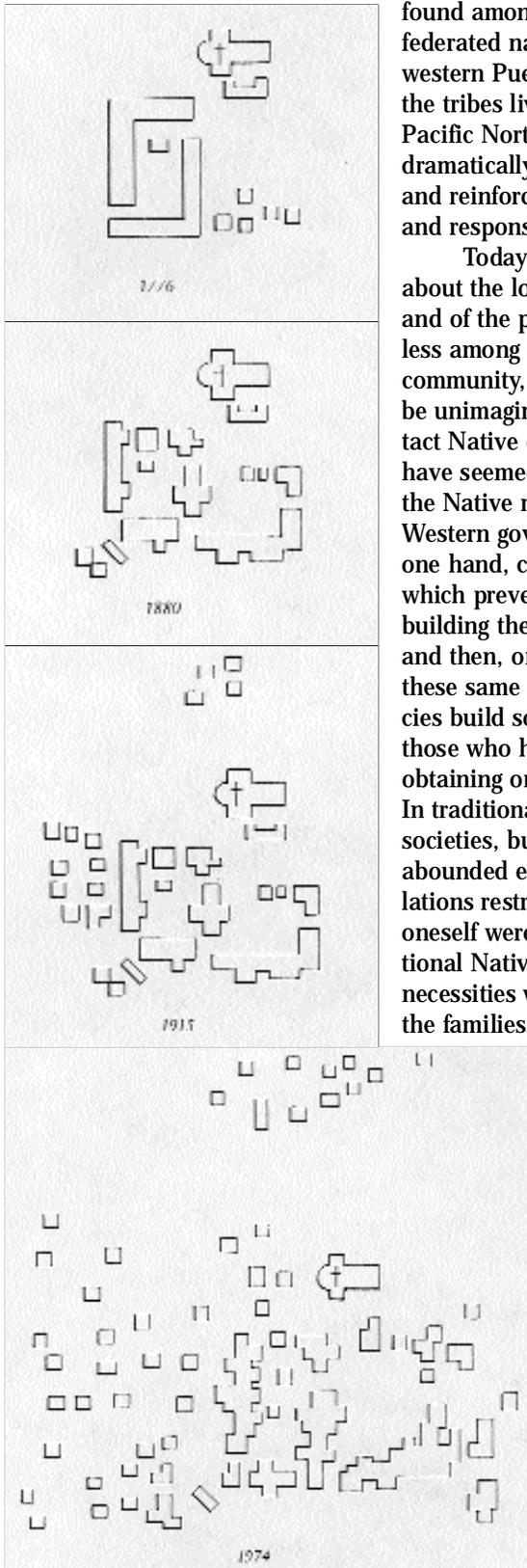
Traditional cultural properties may be difficult to recognize and often hard to define in terms of their physical boundaries. In addition, Western cultural standards differ from those of Native Americans, and evaluation based on tangible evidence alone cannot sufficiently gauge the significance of a property associated with a culture largely grounded in oral traditions.

Ethnographic research has confirmed the importance of Mt. Shasta in the history and cultural traditions of Native Americans. The mountain is (and historically has been) a sacred landscape for the local tribes—Wintu, Shasta and Pit River.

Ongoing discussions over the Mt. Shasta dilemma illuminate individual and group differences regarding what constitutes preservation and perhaps, more specifically, the effects of preservation-based action. In this case, the clear delineation of significance has come up hard against the often unstated assumptions that define and underlie the Euro-American definition of property.

As the State of California, the National Park Service, and others grapple with the Mt. Shasta debate, preservationists can reacquaint themselves with the notion that preservation is not only about buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts, but that it is ultimately about people. Native American communities constantly struggle to preserve their past traditions for their future generations, and it is important that we acknowledge their efforts by working in partnership to preserve and protect those places which give life and value to their culture.▲

Santa Clara maps from P. Nabokov, *Native American Architecture*. Courtesy Rina Swentzell.



being infinitely more important than the well-being and sustenance of the community. This also differs from the Native view which forgoes a measure of individual privacy in favor of the support and nurture of the family and of the community which becomes the extended family. Hence, large communal Native dwellings, as found among the Iroquois confederated nations, the southwestern Pueblo peoples, and the tribes living along the Pacific Northwest Coast, often dramatically united the family and reinforced bonds of kinship and responsibility.

Today we hear much about the loss of family values and of the plight of the homeless among the Euro-American community, concepts that would be unimaginable in the pre-contact Native community. It would have seemed impossibly cruel to the Native mind that modern Western government has, on the one hand, crafted myriad laws which prevent people from building their own dwellings, and then, on the other hand, these same governmental agencies build so few dwellings for those who have no means of obtaining or making their own. In traditional Native American societies, building materials abounded everywhere and regulations restricting sheltering oneself were few. In the traditional Native village, food and necessities were shared among the families.<sup>1</sup> The individual

had an established place in the social unit, and belonged to a house in both a social and architectural sense, rather than the house physically belonging to the individual. Euro-Americans speak proudly and at length about an individual's sacrosanct rights, but very little is said

about a person's responsibilities to his or her community, to other living creatures, or even to our own subsequent generations. Native peoples customarily speak about their responsibility to their children of the seventh generation.

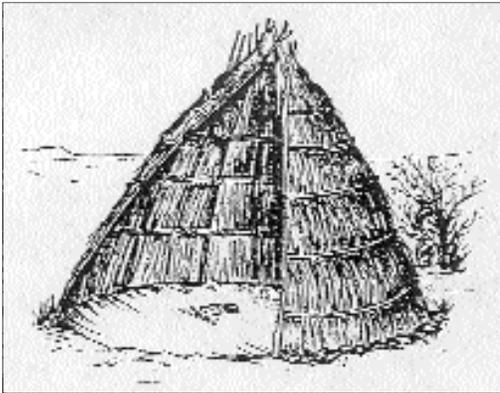
Such profound differences in thought underlie Native architecture, village planning, and landscape use. The Native and Euro-American cultures came into collision in 1492, and they remain so in many ways today. They can and must co-exist, but knowledge, acceptance, and forbearance are absolutely essential. The two key concepts in Native building, perhaps, are, first, the sacramental nature and power of architecture, and second, the connectedness of life in all things, animate and inanimate, in equal measure.

Some American architects probably understand this animism in architecture much better than their clients or their buildings' users, for they like to quote architect Louis I. Kahn, who spoke of "what a building wants to be," of how a brick aspires to be a cathedral, and how in making a building the architect makes a life.<sup>2</sup> In a parallel way, the Native American sees architecture as a physical manifestation of connections to a spiritual world; a building possesses a life and, like other living entities, a building experiences a life cycle that encompasses creation, maturity, decline, and a return to the earth.

A recent brochure distributed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation makes some thought-provoking observations on these ideas, for it combines a view of an ancient Native village complex, apparently Taos, New Mexico, with a quote from Richard Moe, President of the National Trust, which reads: "Historic preservation does more than save our past. By working together, we can also use our unique heritage to bring a stronger sense of community to America." He makes an important point: that preservation is not just about freezing something in a never-changing state, but that it endeavors to sustain and expand the life of the community.

It is significant that it is the Taos pueblo that is shown in the brochure, for this is in many ways the most conservative of the eastern or Rio Grande pueblos. Unlike other pueblos, such as Santa Clara, where modern Portland cement stucco is sometimes used to refinish the adobe brick walls so as to minimize maintenance, at Taos traditional adobe plaster is reapplied by hand each fall, as has been done there for at least four centuries. Preservation is accomplished in both places, but at Taos the annual replastering ceremony continues to be celebrated. Preservation here is an ongoing ceremonial; in bringing the people together in this re-enactment, the bonds of the community continually are re-established.

The substitution of modern Portland cement stucco for the traditional but ephemeral hand-mixed adobe plaster in pueblos such as Santa Clara also touches on another preservation dilemma. Rina Swentzell, born in the Santa Clara pueblo, tells a revealing story. When she was very little, Rina watched for several days as a crack slowly opened in the wall of a nearby adobe house. She asked her grandmother why the family who lived there did not repair the crack. Her grandmother told her not to worry about whether the house was fixed or not. "It has been a good house," grandmother said. "It has been taken care of, fed, blessed, and healed many times during its life, and now it is time for it to go back to the earth." Not long afterward the house was allowed to collapse, and soon after its materials were reused in building a new structure in the same place.<sup>3</sup>



This rebuilding raises an interesting conundrum regarding preservation. The villages of Taos and Santa Clara, like all the Pueblos, are ancient; some, such as Oraibi in Arizona and Acoma in New Mexico, probably date back a thousand years. Yet they are

also living entities. They change and re-form themselves, and yet remain in many important ways the same. In some places, such as Acoma, change is introduced very slowly on the mesa top, while in the Western-style Acoman family houses now appearing on the valley floor, change is highly evident in the electrical and phone wires and the satellite dishes. In other places, such as Santa Clara, change has caused the original dense village to disperse, moving away from the tight clusters of houses defining the plazas, to much looser aggregations of houses. The maps on the preceding page illustrate the gradual dispersal of homes.

I should probably interject here another caveat. There is no such thing as "the Native America" point of view or perspective. There are hundreds. We tend to lump people who represent "the other" into a single all-embracing category. The truth is suggested by maps that show the more than six hundred tribes in the present-day United States at the time of European contact. The patterns identify the broad regional groups of tribes united by language and culture shaped by geography, climate, and fauna. Yet within each of these broad regions there were scores of separate tribes, each with their own diverse languages and

dialects, and perhaps hundreds of different religious practices. And even within a single individual tribe one could find liberal-minded progressives, centrists, and orthodox traditionalists.

The Pacific Northwest is especially complex in this regard, since so many highly divergent cultures and tribes cross paths near the Columbia. There is the coastal zone, stretching from Oregon all the way up through the Alaskan panhandle, with its once-dense populations thriving on the once-incredible bounty of the sea. To the south were the distinct northern Californian tribes with their own unique adaptations to upland forest, Pacific coast, and inland valleys. East of the Cascades stretches the dry Columbia Plateau region generally encompassing the drainage basin of the river from which it gets its name. To the southeast extends the even more arid Great Basin high desert that encompass southeast Oregon, Nevada, and the lands between the Sierra and the Rockies. Each of these geographical and climatic zones fostered highly specialized ways of living, individualized cultures, and each zone was populated by tens of scores of highly individualized tribes, all with their different modes of building, different philosophical and religious concepts. We can readily see that the understanding one might gain of a particular tribe in, say, the damp temperate coastal forests of Oregon or the heavily wooded uplands of the Siskiyous of southwestern Oregon, would be of little use in understanding the needs and interests of the desert-dwelling Piutes of the Great Basin in southeastern Oregon, or even the needs and interests of the people who dwelt along the banks of the lower Columbia for several millennia.

Yet another crucial truth is that Native architecture is an ancient architecture, based on ways of living in balance with a particular landscape and on localized religious practices that reach back several thousands of years. Euro-American culture has tried to change this architecture, forcibly, within two or three generations, most often without a thought given to what the original architectural forms meant or how they responded to local conditions. Oregon has the particular distinction of having yielded not only some of the oldest footwear discovered in the Western hemisphere, but also remains some of the oldest habitations. Sandals woven of yucca fiber were discovered in the 1930s in a rock shelter near Fort Rock in central Oregon; testing done after the development of <sup>14</sup>C carbon dating revealed them to be over 9,000 years old. Nearly as ancient, however, is the brush wickiup uncovered in the Dirty Shame Rockshelter in South Eastern Oregon, built more than 5,000 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

*Dirty Shame wickiup as reconstructed from excavation data from Jesse Jennings' Prehistory of North America. Courtesy Mayfield Publishing Company.*



Navajo hogan; hexagonal cribbed log. Photo courtesy The Arizona State Museum.

In Western cultures, much is made of the form of religious architecture and its appurtenances, so that religious architecture stands out decidedly from ordinary every-day architecture. In fact, this deliberate differentiation is a measure of the way in which Western culture has isolated and separated its religions from daily aspects of living. Among Native peoples, living, working, and religious practices are so interwoven as to make seemingly ordinary daily activities synonymous with religious ceremonies. Even highly sacred places may not be obviously set apart, since they function at an elemental level in daily life. They are used constantly. One example is the hogan, which is both work place, dwelling, health clinic, and setting for religious ceremony all in one. Another example is the kiva entry in the Hopi mesa-top pueblo of Walpi which might easily be mistaken for an entry into a dwelling. Only the greatly attenuated and untrimmed poles of the entry ladder indicate its sacred nature, symbolizing how the first people climbed up to enter the present world.<sup>5</sup>

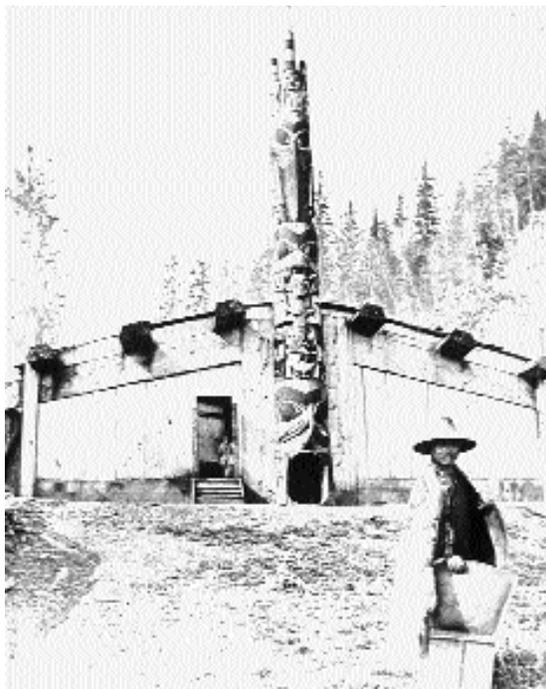
Today, even in pueblos significantly affected by Western values and ways of living, such as at Santa Clara, New Mexico, the plaza remains as a sacred place where dances are performed to restore the community while the sacred spirit-people, the Kachinas, are present among the people. Virtually invisible to the uninitiated, somewhere near the center of the plaza, is a small rock covering the nansipu, representing the opening

to the underworld from which the people first emerged. It is a point of contact with mother earth and the spirits below, and shows, Rina Swentzell writes, the pueblo concept of the feminine principles of connectedness, inclusiveness, and flowingness. It is the spot that marks the central cosmic axis of that particular community, but as an architectural statement, Swentzell writes, it is practically nonexistent in Western terms. For the pueblo people, it does not need to be a monument; its sacredness is assured.<sup>6</sup>

In most Pueblos that plaza is unpaved, so that in dancing the celebrants make direct contact with the mother earth. These dances are expressions of religious beliefs that developed over centuries, and continue with relatively little change.<sup>7</sup> At San Ildefonso they dance in moccasins made of consecrated deer skin, but at other pueblos they dance barefoot to make that contact with the earth more direct and efficacious. Of course, the dance raises dust, which could be viewed either as offensive dirt in the air, or alternatively, as the breath of mother earth and of the people. Indeed, as Swentzell notes, in her native Tewa language, the word for "us" or "the people" is *nung*, the very same word used for "earth" and "dirt."<sup>8</sup> In Anglo parlance, to say a person is "dirt" is an insult; in Tewa one speaks of the people and the earth as being one with each other. A few years ago, a well-intentioned parish priest at the Isleta Pueblo attempted to have the plaza paved with macadam so that when people arrived in their cars and trucks and parked in the plaza for Sunday services they would not raise so much bothersome dust. Uncompromising in his sanitizing zeal and uncomprehending the importance of that bare earth sur-

face, he created such disruption in the community that he was eventually relieved of his post and reassigned.<sup>9</sup>

The notion of preservation as a permanent freezing in time of isolated objects has very little relevance from the Native point of view. Such a concept conflicts with two important Native views of the world: the cyclical flow among living things, and the need to sustain the life of the community. A good example can be seen in the traditional and sacred architecture of the Haida people who



"House Where People Always Want to Go," Haida Village of Xa'ina. Photo by Maynard, 1888. Courtesy the Royal British Columbia Museum.

live on what Westerners call the Queen Charlotte Islands, off the coast of British Columbia, but what they themselves call Haida Gwaii, the land of the Haida.

The wooden plank Haida house may look much like conventional Western buildings, with its broad facade and gently sloped gable, but it is a very different thing. First, before building the structure, elders would assemble in ceremony and address the proposed site for the building, apologizing to it and requesting permission to disturb the earth to build the house. The ground would thus be consecrated. Then, in pre-contact times, the broad planks for the house would be begged or borrowed from the flanks of living red cedar trees, removed only after prayers had been offered for the gift of the wood from the living tree. Red like human flesh, it was viewed as the flesh of the tree. The house was “owned” (if we can use that word) not by one individual or nuclear family but by an entire family clan. Imbued with the living spirit of the clan animal—raven, bear, orca, or whale—the house structure itself was a protective, living thing. The people who resided within belonged to the house, rather than the house belonging to them.

People and communities have life cycles that ebb and flow. In time it may be appropriate and necessary that a community ebb away. The Haida people have left Sqangwai, Ninstints, at the southern tip of Haida Gwaii, and moved to newer villages. The old house frames, the heraldic crest poles, and the mortuary poles have been left in place, allowed slowly to return to the earth where a new life can start and the cycle be restarted.<sup>10</sup>

Few Euro-Americans are accorded the privilege of visiting this sacred site. Sqangwai can be viewed as something like a modern hospice, where death can be accepted at its own pace. At the end of the last century, many artifacts from such seemingly abandoned villages were stripped away; the life stories and cultural memories of whole villages were carted off to distant Anglo museums. As in a hospice, at Sqangwai the cycle of life is allowed to pursue its own schedule of closure and new beginning. The end comes to all things in their allotted time, and the bones of the ancestors can remain at rest.

Richard Moe’s comments noted earlier emphasize the role of preservation in sustaining and enriching the life of the community. With

regard to Native American peoples and their communities, I would argue that preservation must first take into account the living nature of those communities, with an emphasis on the natural cycles of creation, service, decay, and return to the earth. The best way to keep these communities alive as vibrant social and cultural organisms is to allow them to experience this process of re-creation and rebirth. As Rina Swentzell noted in a



Taos Pueblo (North Building), New Mexico. Photo by John K. Hillers, 1880. Courtesy the Museum of New Mexico.

lecture presented at the University of Oregon in the spring of 1993, culture is not what we wish to be, or think we once were. When we try to make it that, it becomes a dead thing. Culture is what we do and comes out of the way we live day by day.<sup>11</sup> It is alive and is continually being remade.

#### Suggested Readings

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- Brown, Joseph Epes. *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Aglala Sioux* (Norman, OK, 1953).
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- McAllester, David P. and Susan W., *Hogans: Navajo Houses and House Songs* (Middletown CT, 1980).
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Newton, John et al., *The Spirit World* (Alexandria, Va., 1992).  
Taylor, Colin F., ed., with William C. Sturtevant. *The Native Americans: The Indigenous People of North America* (New York, 1991).  
Tedlock, D. and B., *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy* (New York, 1975).

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This practice among the Iroquois and other nations was discussed by Lewis A. Morgan in *Houses and House-Life Among the American Aborigines* (Washington, DC, 1881; reprinted 1965); when Morgan did his field research in the 1850s, many elders remembered social practices before Westernization.
- <sup>2</sup> Such views are presented in Richard Saul Wurman, ed., *What Will Be Has Always Been: The Words of Louis I. Kahn* (New York, 1986).
- <sup>3</sup> Rina Swentzell, quoted in Scott Warren, "On Her Own Terms," *Historic Preservation* 44 (November-December 1992): 26-33, 84, 86. The author has also heard Ms Swentzell recount this story.
- <sup>4</sup> For the sandals, see Luther S. Cressman, *The Sandal and the Cave: The Indians of Oregon* (Portland, 1962; reprinted 1981); for the Dirty Shame Rockshelter Wikiup, see C. Melvin Aikens, *Archaeology of Oregon*, 3rd ed. (Portland, 1993): 71-78.
- <sup>5</sup> It must be admitted, however, that disguising the kiva entry in this way was also a deliberate strategy on the part of the Hopi after Spanish priests and American governing officials attempted to eradicate

- Native religious rituals. In pre-contact times, perhaps the kiva was made more visible, as remains of huge dominant kivas in such Anasazi ruins as Casa Rinconada, Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, suggest.
- <sup>6</sup> Swentzell, quoted in Warren, "On Her Own Terms," 32.
- <sup>7</sup> See Vincent Scully, *Pueblo: Mountain, Village, Dance* (New York, 1975).
- <sup>8</sup> Swentzell, quoted in Warren, "On Her Own Terms," 32.
- <sup>9</sup> This was related to the author by Christopher Wilson.
- <sup>10</sup> See George F. MacDonald, *Ninstints: Haida World Heritage Site* (Vancouver, BC, 1983); and also by MacDonald, *Haida Monumental Art: Villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands* (Vancouver, BC, 1983).
- <sup>11</sup> Lecture given as part of the Symposium, "Rediscovering American Architecture," May 7, 1993, Eugene, OR.

*Leland M. Roth is the Marion Dean Ross Professor of Architectural History at the University of Oregon. This essay was originally prepared as part of the Pacific Northwest Conference, Forging Preservation Partnerships: Principles and Practice, sponsored by the National Park Service, Forest Service, The University of Oregon School of Architecture, and several other state and federal agencies. The objective was to share alternative points of view in the hope of throwing new light on what preservation is and on preservation policies and practices.*

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