



Little Hoover Commission
Testimony to be given June 26, 2012

Stephen J. Farneth, FAIA
Founding Principal
Architectural Resources Group

1. Introduction and Background:

- First of all, I would like to thank the Commission for the very important work that you are doing, and for asking me to be here today to make these remarks. I hope they are useful.
- My name is Stephen Farneth. I am a registered architect with 35 years of experience in California in the field of architectural historic preservation. The company which I founded in 1980, Architectural Resources Group, specializes in providing professional services in the planning, conservation and design for the preservation of cultural resources. Extensive experience over three decades in the documentation and rehabilitation of historic structures in numerous state and national parks has formed a large part of my career and the firm's overall practice. I am also very familiar with the various standards which apply to our field including *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The focus of all of my work has been on finding solutions to issues for preservation that enhance buildings' use, extend their lives, and make them more accessible to the public.

2. Cultural Resources and the Collection of California State Parks:

- Over time, the California State Parks system has developed a tremendous collection of places, structures, and artifacts, which, taken as a whole, tell the great sweep of the history of California.

Principals

STEPHEN J. FARNETH, FAIA, LEED AP
CHARLES EDWIN CHASE, AIA
TAKASHI FUKUDA
AARON JON HYLAND, AIA
NAOMI O. MIROGLIO, AIA
DAVID P. WESSEL, AIC, FAPT

BRUCE D. JUDD, FAIA, EMERITUS

Associate Principals

JAMES MCLANE, AIA, LEED AP

Senior Associates

ANDREW G. BLYHOLDER, AIA, LEED AP
DEBORAH J. COOPER, AIA, LEED AP
KATIE E. HORAK
LISA KUCIK, AIA, LEED AP
CATHLEEN MALMSTROM, AIA
CATHERINE DEJ. VIETH, AIA, LEED AP
KATHERINE T. PETRIN
W. DEAN RANDLE, AIA
CHRISTOPHER J. SMITH
JODY R. STOCK

Offices

SAN FRANCISCO
PASADENA
PORTLAND

Northern California Office

Pier 9, The Embarcadero
San Francisco, California, 94111
email arg@argsf.com
fax 415.421.0127
415.421.1680
www.argsf.com



The range of these resources includes archeological and native American sites, the California Missions era, the Gold Rush, Railroad Development, and Asian immigration, and 20th century development. This collection provides us, our children, and future generations with educational, recreational, and research opportunities. As a collection, it is a phenomenal, one of a kind, and completely irreplaceable resource. In my opinion, it is essential that the State of California continue to own, protect, maintain, and make accessible this resource to its citizens.

- Frequently, the value of cultural resources in parks is unrecognized or under-expressed, either because the resources themselves are underutilized, or because their vocal constituents are relatively small. In fact, cultural resources have tremendous worth and immense opportunity as a means to achieve some current political priorities. For example, we as a society discuss the importance of continuing to invest in education, yet very little value is placed on the importance of cultural resources in educating the current and future generations about our shared history. While we focus our education discussion on abstract classroom teaching, or on computer-based interaction, historic places can provide real on-site experiences, a type of learning which is ever more rare and therefore more valuable. Investment in the preservation and use of these sites is an investment in education.
- There has been a great deal of discussion about the increasing divide between rich and poor, with a diminishing middle class. Parks, and historic resources are one very effective way of creating places and experiences which can be used by all, which speak to all, and which through experiencing our shared history, bring us back together as a society. This is of incalculable value as an equalizing or stabilizing force.



- Traditionally park management has considered and categorized parks as either historical or natural resource parks, depending on the type of primary resources. Often natural resources receive higher priority. In fact, the two categories are very much interrelated and deserve to be considered in an integrated manner. Almost all of our great natural resource places have an equally important layer of historic resources, settlements development, and history - and the same can be said for most historically significant places - their original and natural settings are often important in their own right. Having a discussion about the cultural resources component to the state parks may be helpful in bringing focus to this issue, but ultimately, the great opportunities and values of these places will be found in their integration; in the preservation and enhancement of both natural and cultural values.
3. Assessment of Existing Conditions:
- Historic structures and sites require ongoing maintenance. Without adequate maintenance the materials and structures deteriorate and ultimately are lost. Because the materials themselves are the resource, and frequently those materials are unique and not replaceable, preservation and maintenance of those materials is more critical, more difficult, and sometimes more expensive. In addition to special maintenance procedures required for selected materials or features, historic structures also require a basic level of care, such as roofing repair, paint coatings, landscape control, etc.
 - Even in prosperous times, the state parks budget for repair and maintenance of the collection has been challenging, never quite adequate to be really comprehensive. However, reductions of funding over the past several years have required parks staff to make very difficult decisions of triage, where to place priorities for limited maintenance funds. Buildings are being mothballed, or abandoned, repairs are being limited to the most serious problems, and selected areas of deterioration or damage are closed to visitors.



Levels of damage or deterioration which would not be allowed in a museum collection are accepted because there is no other choice. Often urgently needed repairs are deferred to future years.

- While it may be possible to continue this triage approach for a short-term, as a long-term strategy, this is untenable. Essentially, it results in a policy of demolition through neglect.
 - An additional hazard to the historic structures is security. As parks are closed, or visitation and use are limited, hazards due to vandalism become much more critical. Appropriate methods and budgets for protecting and mothballing historic structures until future funding arrives is a critical and immediate component of a long-term maintenance strategy.
4. Potential Alternative Models for Management and Revenue:
- State Parks belong to the people of the state, and I believe very strongly that closing, abandoning, or otherwise de-accessioning places from State Parks control would be a mistake. However, that does not mean that only the traditional, tax-based structure for management is appropriate. It is essential that new methods for revenue development, resource management, and building use be developed. There are other successful public/private partnership models that can provide revenue, capital investment, and long-term program development without giving up government control. A number of these models are already in place or in development for selected state parks.
 - The most time-tested, successful, and still growing examples of partnerships that I am familiar with exist in the national park system. In Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), an urban national park comprised of incomparable natural and cultural resources, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) has grown to be a highly successful non-profit partner,



raising funds, creating and managing projects, and supporting public programs. GGNPC recently opened two new visitor centers located at Sutro Baths and the Golden Gate Bridge, projects funded and managed by the Conservancy, with control, review and oversight by the NPS.

- In addition to the GGNPC, the National Park Service at GGNRA has established on-going relationships with many other organizations to rehabilitate, inhabit, and create public programs for historic sites within the park. A few of these organizations include the Headlands Center for the Arts, Marine Mammal Center, and Discovery Museum. There are many others. Each organization has brought not just funds, but meaningful engagement with the historical and natural resource, and most importantly, they have brought people and programs, extending the meaning and value of the park. All their input has occurred with the partnership and oversight of the NPS.
- The Presidio provides a similar, but subtly different, management structure. In 1993, when the Presidio was added to the National Park system, the NPS was faced with a potential capital investment of a billion dollars. Rather than making historic buildings available to strictly private development, the Presidio Trust was created to manage, develop, and maintain all structures within the National Historic District. Simultaneously, an overall plan for the Presidio has been managed by the National Park Service. Twenty years later, the Presidio Trust has achieved the goal established by Congress to be economically self-sustaining by 2013. It achieved that goal through very careful preservation and adaptive use development, bringing not just private investment, but also education and public programming to the site.
- Enhanced concessions contracts are another model for shifting costs and management responsibilities while enhancing revenues. At Yosemite National Park, the NPS and concessioner Delaware



North Corporation (DNC) are joined in a management partnership to maintain and operate such great resources as The Ahwahnee. A significant portion of concession revenue goes back into a Capital Improvements Fund (CIF), which is jointly controlled by DNC and NPS management. A similar concessions model exists in the state parks system at Asilomar. It may be useful to compare concessions operating agreements.

- Private investment and development, always a sensitive, sometimes controversial, idea in public park settings is also a possibility in selected locations and with appropriate controls. GGNRA provides a number of examples of this, most recently the conversion of the Fort Baker garrison structures to serve as a privately owned (NPS ground lease) and operated hotel and conference center, in which NPS has retained limited use rights. This is a highly integrated public/private partnership between NPS, a private developer, and an operator.

5. Adaptive Use of Historical Structures:

- While there are many historic buildings within the California State Parks collection which must (and should) remain as public historical museums, there are many other buildings and sites within the parks where other, new uses might be considered. Whereas historical house museums serve an important function, they can be very limiting in terms of visitation and ongoing use, and often, historical sites are capable of being more varied in program and more engaged with the public. Adaptive use of historic structures is a proven approach to keeping buildings vital, maintained, and used. If properly executed, this approach can retain all of the cultural and historical features of the historic building.
- There are many examples of successful adaptive use projects in national and state parks. One example that I am familiar with exists at Angel Island State Park. The Angel Island Immigration



Station, a site that is of tremendous national significance and educational value, consists of several remaining buildings, as well as site features from no longer extant buildings. The remaining Detention Barracks has been restored and interpreted as a museum to tell the story of the site. The Hospital Building, long abandoned and in poor condition, is being adapted to serve an important function as a library, archive, and research center for the site, to be administered by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation.

- The bigger picture for Angel Island however, includes the West Garrison; a very early (Civil War era) collection of military structures which has been mothballed and deteriorating for many years. Similarly, the East Garrison, a collection of 20th century military structures sits abandoned and deteriorating. Perhaps a larger administrative entity, such as one similar to the Presidio Trust, could be empowered to plan, invest, and rehabilitate these places for new uses. They are an opportunity for investment and preservation, but without investment and care they will not last much longer.
- Not all cultural resources are appropriate for adaptive use or expanded visitor engagement. Some are simply too important historically, or the changes required for new uses would cause too much damage to the historic fabric to be viable. However, a careful survey of appropriate opportunities within the California State Parks system will identify both areas of opportunities and areas of preservation concern. In addition, any adaptive use program should only be considered in a way that will meet *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. All planning work should occur under the oversight of both California State Parks and the California State Office of Historic Preservation. These are time-tested standards and oversight procedures that will assure the quality of thought and execution in any rehabilitation work.



6. Our Responsibility to Future Generations:

- One difference between natural resources and cultural resources is that even while natural resources are exploited or damaged in the current day, nature has the ability to heal and regenerate. Cultural resources, once lost through conscious policy or simply through neglect, will be lost forever. They cannot heal or regenerate in the same way a landscape or vegetation can. We need to consider very carefully how we can solve current day problems, while still protecting these special and irreplaceable places.
- One of the primary differences between architects engaged in developing new buildings, and those engaged in preservation, is that preservation architects look at a much longer sweep of time. While a new building's design life may last only 50 years or less, preservation, by definition, is focused on keeping historic buildings as long as possible, across multiple generations. I believe that today, in considering proper treatment of California's great cultural resources, it is essential that we keep that long-term view. We have an obligation to find solutions that preserve these great places for future generations. There are obviously tremendous current-day demands for funds for pressing needs, and a short-term solution to budget considerations may not assign the highest priority to proper care of our historic resources. I would suggest, however, that one criterion for evaluating decisions regarding these resources would be to think about how future generations will look at the consequences of our current decisions.