

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE:
 UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES AND
 IMPROVING THE PRACTICE

Margaret Prest,
Master of Historic Preservation,
2011

Directed By: Dr. Donald Linebaugh,
 Historic Preservation Department

It may be an increased interest in recycling or the thrill of hunting down the perfect solid wood door or the belief that somewhere exists a claw foot bathtub to replace the one that was lost in a previous renovation, but whatever the reason, the practice of architectural salvage is on the rise. While many salvagers consider themselves preservationists because they prevent unique items from being destroyed, some preservationists see the practice as detrimental because once an item is removed from a building it loses its original context and its history can easily be lost. Multiple values guide the actions and beliefs of both groups and in some cases they share the same values. This paper will consider some of the values driving the actions of historic preservationists and architectural salvagers and explore ways to use this knowledge to improve the practice for the benefit of all.

ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE: UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES AND
IMPROVING THE PRACTICE

By

Margaret Louise Prest

Masters Final Project submitted to the Faculty of the Historic Preservation Program
of the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Historic
Preservation
2011

Advisory Committee:
Professor Donald Linebaugh, Chair
Professor Sidney Brower

© Copyright by
Margaret Louise Prest
2011

Dedication

To Christopher...

I am so glad you decided to come along for the adventure.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Donald Linebaugh, the primary reader for this project and the director of the Historic Preservation Program, for all the support, encouragement and advice he has provided over the last two and a half years. As a result of the copious amounts of blue marks he provides on every draft of a paper, my writing continues to improve and I have learned to think more critically. Without his dedication to all his students, HISP would not be the valuable program it is today.

I would also like to thank my other reader, Professor Sidney Brower in the Urban Studies and Planning Program, who took time out of his last semester before retirement to meet with me and make sure I was thinking outside of a preservation bubble.

Thank you also to Jennifer McInerney, my friend for eighteen years and my editor for the past ten years. Your helpful suggestions always make for a stronger paper.

And lastly, I would like to acknowledge my parents who took me to my first salvage shop when I was a little kid and who have supported me in all my endeavors.

Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Historical Context	5
Chapter 3: Architectural Salvage Today	16
Chapter 4: Values in Architectural Salvage	25
Chapter 5: Preservation Values	32
Chapter 6: Analysis and Conclusions	41
Bibliography	51

List of Tables

Table 1: Architectural Salvage Values	26
Table 2: Historic Preservation Values	33

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Arch of Constantine.....	6
Figure 2 – Lawrence Room (Jacobethan Room). De-accessioned from the Boston Museum of Art Collection in 1930	8
Figure 3 – Study, Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan ...	8
Figure 4 – Richmond Room, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City	9
Figure 5 – Framing timbers with unused mortises in the chicken house at Bostwick, Bladensburg, Maryland.....	11
Figure 6 – "Day" discarded at the Meadowlands.....	13
Figure 7 – Doorknobs on display at Materials Unlimited, Ypsilanti, Michigan.....	17
Figure 8 – Mantels. Architectural Antiques Exchange, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania..	17
Figure 9 – Independence Mall marble. Provenance, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.	17
Figure 10 – Baluster candleholders.....	29

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first time I walked into Materials Unlimited, an architectural salvage store in Ypsilanti, Michigan, I spent hours wandering around and daydreaming about all the beautiful items they had for sale. In this store, I could purchase glass door knobs that turned purple with age, a set of built-in bookshelves so large they would not fit in my post-war ranch house or a claw foot tub big enough for an adult to take a bath or a child to swim in. My first introduction to these types of architectural elements was seeing them in restored homes I visited, and so I was pleased to know that someday I could purchase these materials for my own home. Since that first visit to Materials Unlimited, I have studied the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and learned about the importance of context when considering any historic items. This paper stems from a conflict of multiple values that is pulling me in two different directions. While I do not want to see buildings torn apart and their elements sold off, I also do not want to see these items thrown into a landfill when people would be happy to reuse them in many different ways.

Over the past few months, I have read about the practice of architectural salvage with the hope of reconciling or at least better understanding my very mixed feelings on the subject. I also read pieces by Randall Mason and Alois Reigl about the different values embodied in historic preservation in order to understand the conflicting values of preservation and salvage. Almost all of the literature I reviewed about salvage sang the praises of the practice and those that did not, presented both the pros and the cons and still found it a good idea.

As I looked for more information on salvage, I was excited to discover an education session at the 2011 National Trust Conference entitled “Building Nuggets: Architectural Salvage and the Standards.” I walked into this education session expecting to hear from people who struggled to figure out how the competing values of preservation and salvage could be resolved. Surprisingly, exactly the opposite message was embraced by the presenter and most attendees. As might be expected, the main concern related to the use of salvaged elements focused around the issue of context. Many participants felt that if a salvaged element was reused in a building for decorative purposes the building owner was creating a false reality that deceived visitors into believing the element was original to the building. The vast majority of people who spoke during the session believed that as soon as an element was removed from a building the element lost all of its context and history and so it should not be removed from its original location under any circumstances. I got the impression that people would rather see elements thrown into a landfill then reused out of context.¹

As someone recently trained in the field of historic preservation, I will admit I was very surprised to find that this “all or nothing” perspective was still so prevalent. I left the workshop convinced that preservationists need to continue to work to rehabilitate and preserve the built environment, but when total preservation of a building is not an option we need to be willing to pursue other avenues to preserve some important architectural elements. The debate I was having with myself boiled down to the title of a book edited by Michael A. Tomlan called *Preservation of What*,

¹Laura Pinney Burge, “Building Nuggets: Architectural Salvage and the Standards” (presentation, National Preservation Conference, Buffalo, NY, October 19-22, 2011.)

*For Whom?*² What is salvage preserving and for whom and what are the diehard preservationists at the education session preserving and for whom?

As noted above, the debate about architectural salvage comes down to a question of values. Some people believe an architectural element only has value to society if it is seen in its original context so viewers can understand it in relationship to an entire historic property and if it retains its “authenticity.” While recognizing the value of context, other people place a high value on the history, artistry or craftsmanship of an element and would rather see it reused than lost to the world completely. Still others see the financial and environmental value in reusing salvaged materials when possible. A major trend in preservation scholarship is a fuller appreciation of the complex and often conflicting values that are present in most historic preservation situations and architectural salvage is no exception. I argue that there are positive and negative aspects to the practice of architectural salvage, but to eliminate its use would mean the possible loss of many historic resources as well as an increase in the amount of construction waste disposed of each year. Not every building can be saved from demolition and if the architectural elements and reusable materials in the building are not salvaged they will be destroyed. The questions addressed in this paper include how the modern day salvage industry developed, what values are held by those who support salvage and those who oppose it, and if people do have concerns with salvage, whether there are ways to improve it and better the industry for all.

² *Preservation of What, for Whom? Critical Look At Historical Significance*, ed. Michael A. Tomlan (Ithica, NY: National Council for Preservation Education, 1997).

The paper starts with an overview of the history of salvage dating back to Roman times. I will then explain how architectural salvage works today and who is involved in the practice. Next, I will discuss in detail how salvaged items are used today and the values held by people who support salvage, and follow that with information on the values held by preservationists and how those conflict with the practice of salvage. The paper will conclude with an analysis of the practice of architectural salvage and recommendations on how to improve the practice.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

The use of salvaged architectural materials dates back more than two thousand years and reflects a range of values. Throughout that time period builders and owners chose to use salvaged materials for many reasons. Limited resources, the desire to display items of conquest taken during war or an opportunity to show off wealth and a sense of culture were all reasons to use salvaged materials in the past and some of these reasons still drive the practice today.

Once a quarry yields all of its marble or an old growth forest is cut down, the only way for a builder to gain access to those resources is to import materials from a greater distance or reuse available pieces. By late antiquity, most of the marble used in buildings in Italy was second hand because the quarries could no longer produce the quantity builders wanted.³ Until the twelfth-century, Britons used stones from standing or collapsed Roman buildings to build their new churches. The practice eventually tapered off because they exhausted the ruins' supply and because the shift towards intricate gothic architecture required different materials.⁴ In both of these cases, economic and uniqueness values drove the use of salvage. If another building did not come down, a new one could not be built because the type and quality of the building materials were unavailable otherwise.

The other type of salvaged material or *spolia* found in structures still standing today are the spoils of war or the items one group would take from another as a sign

³ Dale Kinney, "The Concept of Spoila," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 233.

⁴ Ibid., 235.

of triumph.⁵ One of the most well-known examples of this type of *spolia* is the Arch of Constantine in Rome. This triumphal arch was constructed in 312 AD and is decorated with reliefs taken from other monuments (Figure 1). Some scholars believe the reliefs were used because builders constructed the arch over just a few years and did not have time carve new panels. Other scholars argue the designer took specific panels from other monuments in order to make the comparison between Constantine I and Roman rulers of the past by displaying his conquests.⁶ If this is the case, builders stole these reliefs off other monuments in order to celebrate Constantine I's victory in war and they obviously placed a high value on the uniqueness of the materials they were taking as well as their historic, cultural and decorative value.

Figure 1 - Arch of Constantine. Source: Wikipedia.

A more recent example of destruction and reuse as a sign of victory occurred in England between 1536 and 1540. During this period, Henry VIII encouraged the vandalism and demolition of the great monasteries throughout the country as a sign of his power and the rise of the Church of England. People following Henry VIII's wishes treated the cathedrals as quarries.⁷ This is one of the last broad examples of *spolia*. After that period, more and more people took to paying great sums of money for architectural elements, although theft of architectural elements does continue to this day.

From the seventeenth- through the nineteenth-century, homeowners often salvaged large items such as mantel pieces, staircases and wood paneling from their

⁵ Ibid., 235.

⁶ Ibid., 240.

⁷ John Harris, *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2007), 20.

family homes and installed these items in new buildings. Wood paneling which people used as insulation was less expensive than tapestries, so it was not uncommon to see this material moved from one building to another.⁸ Also during that period, wood was becoming increasingly scarce in England and other European countries and so it continued to make financial sense to move wooden objects from one location to another.

Throughout this same time period another type of architectural salvage started to develop. Instead of removing and reusing just a few items from a room, people started to move entire rooms. The architect Jacques Lamerrier incorporated the Gothic chapel and a salon from Cardinal Richelieu's old family castle into his new chateau.⁹ Another example is the Amber Room which was made of carved and polished amber in 1701. After the room was constructed, its owner gave it as a gift to Peter the Great, and Empress Elizabeth proceeded to move it multiple times to suit her wishes.¹⁰ In both of these cases the rooms were transferred within Europe.

Starting in the late nineteenth-century, the movement of European rooms to the United States became popular. A crew would deconstruct the entire room, box it up and ship it to the US where builders would reconstruct it inside private residences, office buildings and art museums. Many of these rooms contained detailed wall and floor coverings as well as decorative stone and glass work. One of the earliest examples of a room which made a transatlantic voyage is the Lawrence Room. Mrs. Timothy Lawrence purchased the "Jacobethan" room with its intricately carved wood

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Ibid., xi.

¹⁰ Ibid., xii.

panels in 1876 and had it installed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Figure 2).¹¹ More recognizable people who purchased European rooms and brought them to this country include Edsel Ford and William Randolph Hearst. Edsel and Eleanor Ford installed significant amounts of five different rooms from English houses in their 1929 Cotswold-style house in Michigan (Figure 3).¹² It is estimated that William Randolph Hearst spent millions of dollars in his pursuit of intriguing historic building elements. He dealt with dealers throughout Europe and purchased and installed items such as a c.1750's Venetian Ballroom, English beamed ceilings and a carved oak dining room from Scotland just to name a few.¹³

Figure 2 - Lawrence Room (Jacobethan Room). De-accessioned from the Boston Museum of Art Collection in 1930. Source: John Harris, *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvage*.

Figure 3 – Study, Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan. Source: www.oldhouseonline.com

The purchasing and reinstalling of rooms was not only in vogue for European rooms, but American rooms as well. In 1936 when the Williams House, a Federal period house in Richmond, Virginia, was slated for demolition, local architect Thomas Waterman salvaged the mahogany interior of the drawing room. Waterman sold the interior to an antique dealer who stored all the elements of the room in a barn for 30 years and then in 1968 donated the room to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in

¹¹ Ibid., 101.

¹² Ibid., 213.

¹³ Ibid., 221.

New York City (Figure 4).¹⁴ If Mr. Waterman had not seen the historic value of this room it could have easily been lost when the building was razed. Many values including historic, aesthetic, decorative, architectural and uniqueness drove the craze for acquiring entire rooms from other buildings. Each room was unique, often had a long and intricate history, and showed off the highest quality materials and craftsmanship.

Figure 4 – Richmond Room, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Source: www.metmuseum.org.

While these well-to-do people may have been salvaging rooms and architectural elements from possible demolition, they considered themselves collectors, not salvagers. They purchased rare antiques and in the process amassed great collections of architectural elements. The use of the term salvage in regard to architectural elements came about during the latter half of the twentieth-century as the newest wave of the practice got started. No longer were just the rich allowed to have beautiful items from another time and another place in their homes. The general public gained access to previously used architectural elements as the result of work done by people like Reynold Lowe. While working on demolition jobs, Mr. Lowe slowly salvaged architectural elements and amassed such a large collection he eventually opened Materials Unlimited.

While the most well-to-do people collected entire rooms, another type of salvage was going on in rural and low-income communities across the country. As families grow and change so do their needs and often an outbuilding that was very

¹⁴ “American Federal Era Period Rooms,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, December 10, 2011, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/fede/hd_fede.htm.

useful twenty years ago is no longer useful because it is too small for a growing farm operation or it has become obsolete as tasks change. Whatever the reasons, it was often more cost- and time-effective to use the elements of the old building to construct a new building. For example, the timbers in the nineteenth-century barn at Bostwick, an eighteenth-century estate in Bladensburg, Maryland, show evidence of this type of change. Upon close inspection of the framing members, one can see unused mortises indicating that the wood was reused from another structure (Figure 5). This practice of reusing what was available is a long and popular tradition among African-Americans as well. For example, Ruth Little explains that the Scarborough House on Fayetteville Street in Durham, North Carolina, was built using salvaged Colonial Revival materials from a demolished house.¹⁵ These are just two examples of using the materials at hand to build what is needed, but further research of homes and outbuildings would show that many historic structures were built using salvaged materials.

¹⁵ M. Ruth Little, "The Other Side of the Tracks: The Middle-Class Neighborhoods That Jim Crow Built in Early-Twentieth Century North Carolina," in *Exploring Everyday Landscapes*, ed. Annmarie Adams and Sally McMurry (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), **PAGE NUMBER**.



Figure 5 - Framing timbers with unused mortises in the chicken house at Bostwick, Bladensburg, Maryland. Source: Dr. Donald Linebaugh.

The architectural salvage industry as we know it today started in the late 1960s as the result of three different factors. During this period, historic structures were being demolished at an alarming rate which produced an abundance of salvageable materials. Additionally, concern for the historic structures and landscapes of our nation's past was increasing because so many historic resources were being lost. Finally, with the rise of the environmental movement in the 1960s, people across the country expressed an interest in reuse and recycling.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, urban renewal swept through cities and resulted in the loss of many historic resources. For example, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, many of the seventeenth- through nineteenth-century houses were demolished. As people in the region increasingly valued preservation, they joined together to save the town's history from the wrecking ball.¹⁶ Volunteers such as James Galvin would set out in the morning to salvage doors, paneling and

¹⁶ Patrick Alley, e-mail message to author, September 6, 2011.

mantelpieces before the wrecking crews started work and by afternoon the building would be a pile of rubble.¹⁷ In the case of Portsmouth, all of this salvaged material went into barns owned by the Strawberry Banke Museum. A few years ago the organization inventoried the collection and some items were given to museums or sold to salvage companies.¹⁸ This type of systematic destruction of blocks of buildings happened throughout the United States in the name of urban renewal. In many cases everything was lost, but Strawberry Banke Museum serves as a great reminder that salvage is one way to protect historic building elements even when every building cannot be saved.

Destruction of historic structures in the name of urban renewal extended to large cities and well-known buildings as well. In the early 1960s in New York City, developers worked out a deal that called for the demolition of Penn Station and the creation of Madison Square Garden. The Beaux-Art train station which stretched across four city blocks had been designed by the firm McKim, Meade and White and was completed in 1910. The huge building with its pink granite columns, intricate stone carvings and massive waiting room with an iron and glass ceiling was no longer considered an asset for its owners but viewed as an unprofitable albatross.¹⁹ The demolition of Penn Station started in the autumn of 1963 and almost the entire building, including the figurines which adorned the four main entrances to the building, went into a landfill in New Jersey. However, the fourteen free standing

¹⁷ “History & Mission,” *Strawberry Banke Museum*, December 1, 2011, <http://www.strawberybanke.org/about-us/mission.html>.

¹⁸ Specifically, materials that lost their provenance and thus their context when the identification tags disintegrated or were separated from the item were donated or sold.

¹⁹ Eric J. Plosky, “The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station: Changing Attitudes Towards Historic Preservation in New York City” (master’s thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999), 19.

eagle figures from the building were saved and now reside in various places throughout the country. None of the “Day” and “Night” sculptures surrounding clocks on each façade of the building were purposefully saved, and a 1968 photograph shows one of the figurines in the landfill (Figure 6).²⁰

Figure 6 - "Day" discarded at the Meadowlands. Source: The Keystone, Spring 1998.

Although Penn Station’s owners did not see the value in salvaging any of the elements from the building, many preservation-minded people did and the stories of their rescue work abound. One couple who documented the building’s demolition in photographs saved some of the stools from the coffee shop.²¹ A mechanic on the Pennsylvania Railway who passed through the station at the time of demolition received permission to take an eagle head out of a rubble pile headed for the landfill.²² In 1968, a man and his son visiting the site where the building was dumped found two 29 inch tall granite balusters and took them home in order to rescue beautiful fragments of history.²³

If you pair these stories of individuals salvaging what they could so a chapter in New York’s history was not lost with the two year long struggle by preservationists to stop the demolition, it is no wonder that preservation issues gained momentum in the following years. Losing the fight to save this stunning building galvanized the preservation movement in New York City and by 1965 the Landmarks Preservation

²⁰ David W. Dunlap, “Bird Week – A Penn Station Eagle in Poughkeepsie,” City Room (blog), May 5, 2011 (6:27 PM), <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/bird-week-a-penn-station-eagle-in-poughkeepsie/>

²¹ David W. Dunlap, “A Quest for Fragments of the Past; Calling Penn Station’s Scattered Remains Back Home,” *New York Times* (New York City, NY) August 16, 1998.

²² Dunlap, Bird Week.

²³ Dunlap, “A Quest for Fragments...”

Committee became a permanent city agency with the authority to designate landmarks.²⁴ The fight to save architectural landmarks occurred not just in New York City but across the country as the result of an increased interest in local history, the American Civil War centennial and the nation's bicentennial, and the destruction caused by urban renewal and highway development. Preservationists were concerned and energized and rallied for passage of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. As historic preservation battles were won and lost during this period, more and more people turned to salvage when preservation was no longer an option for a building.

Many of the salvage companies in operation today came about through the owner's interest in reusing building materials. Bob Beaty, the owner of Provenance, a salvage company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, first got involved in salvage in the 1970s. During an interview, Bob said he has always been fascinated by what we throw away. One of his first jobs was at the Berkeley, California, landfill, and along with others, Bob started Urban Ore, a company that salvaged usable building materials from the landfill and sold them to homeowners and contractors. This work in the salvage business lead Bob to composting, and his involvement in composting and recycling lead him to start Provenance in 2004. He would pick up salvageable items during recycling projects and eventually started to salvage materials from buildings before renovations or demolitions. Today, Bob and his small staff run Provenance out of a 15,000 sq. ft. warehouse which is filled with just about any architectural element imaginable.

Reynold Lowe, the founder of Materials Unlimited in Ypsilanti, Michigan, opened the retail business in 1974, but spent years amassing the collection of

²⁴ Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station," 54.

salvaged materials that served as the original inventory. Although a sculptor by training, Mr. Lowe worked for a demolition company in the late 1960s and through that work he was able to salvage pieces here and there.²⁵ Mr. Lowe recognized the aesthetic value of many of the architectural elements in the buildings he was demolishing and tried to save what he could. He also recognized the financial value of salvage objects and showed his boss that they could get \$0.50 for the lead caning in a stained glass window or salvage the window and resell it for \$100.²⁶ Keeping both of these values in mind has paid off and today Materials Unlimited, which sells just about every type of salvaged material imaginable, is housed in a 15,000 sq. ft. space and has four employees.

Summary

The history of architectural salvage stretches back nearly 2,000 years and over that period people salvaged many different types of items for many different reasons. The decorative elements on the Arch of Constantine were reused to tell a story and demonstrate power. Starting in the seventeenth-century people collected entire rooms as a way to show off their wealth and interest in history, and throughout the centuries, people have deconstructed buildings and reused the materials in order to save time and money. The most recent interest in architectural salvage came about as a result of people starting to value the history, quality, uniqueness and environmental benefits of architectural elements that if not salvaged and preserved would end up in a landfill.

²⁵ “About Us,” *Materials Unlimited*, November 15, 2011
http://www.materialsunlimited.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=27.

²⁶ Scotty James (General Manager of Materials Unlimited) in interview with the author, November 2011.

Chapter 3: Architectural Salvage Today

Before considering the different types of salvage companies and how they acquire their merchandise, it is important to understand what items in a building can be salvaged. Second Chance in Baltimore, Maryland, has just about every imaginable type of architectural element for sale in their four large warehouses. Are you in the market for a wooden floor from a roller rink or an oak bar set which includes the bar, an overhang and the bar back with two mirrors? If you are looking to remodel a bathroom or kitchen, fixtures such as tubs and sinks are available as well as complete kitchen cabinet sets. Doors and windows of every shape and size can be salvaged and reused along with framing timbers, bricks and radiators (Figure 7 & 8) . Second Chance received the right to salvage materials out of the Philadelphia Civic Center before its demolition in 2005. Some of items salvaged from the building include turnstiles, and an art deco ticket booth. In 2004, Bob Beaty and his crew at Provenance salvaged doors, floors, mantels and other smaller items from the Divine Lorraine Hotel, an 1894 Victorian apartment building that still stands vacant. Provenance also received the salvage contract for the 1950's era brick and marble walkways from the mall at Independence National Historical Park Hall when it was renovated in the early 2000s (Figure 9). Yet another example of the myriad things that can be salvaged is found at Bostwick. The stairs in the front yard that connect the terraces were salvaged from the U.S. Capital. So, the answer to the question “what can be salvaged?” is just about anything.



Figure 7 - Doorknobs on display at Materials Unlimited, Ypsilanti, Michigan.



Figure 8 - Mantels. Architectural Antiques Exchange, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Figure 9 - Independence Mall marble. Provenance, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In order to understand fully the practice of architectural salvage, it is important to understand the distinctions between the different types of salvage companies, how they acquire their materials and what values they hold highest. Architectural salvage companies, also known as architectural antique companies, deal in higher end and historic elements. The inventory in an architectural salvage shop may include fireplace mantels, doors, staircases, light fixtures, wooden floors, drawer and door handles, stone and marble, and many other items. Some shops specialize in certain materials such as brick or lumber, but all of these shops share some common values. They all value historic, high quality materials, but aesthetic value is particularly important because customers are almost always buying something because they like the look of it and desire to own it for themselves.

Most of these architectural antique companies are for-profit businesses that purchase the items they resell in the shop. The size of a shop can vary from a stall in an antique mall to 100,000 sq. ft. warehouse filled with all kinds of items. According to the *2010-2011 Guide to Architectural Salvage, Antique Lumber & Garden Antique Companies* there are more than 100 companies specializing in architectural salvage and they can be found in 43 states. Not all of the companies include an established date in their listing, but of the ones that do nearly equal numbers were established in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Some companies, such as Southern Accents Architectural Antiques in Cullman, Alabama, Ricca's Architectural Sales in New Orleans, Robinson's Antiques which specializes in hardware in Lake Odessa, Michigan and Aardvark Antiques in Newport, Rhode Island, started in the 1960s.²⁷

²⁷ Rich Ellis, *2010-11 Guide to Architectural Salvage, Antique Lumber & Garden Antique Companies* (Rocky Mount, VA: RKE Publishing LLC, 2010).

Salvage companies can be found in rural as well as urban settings because each area provides the business with a different type of customer and a different type of inventory. Even a quick glance through the guide will provide a reader with a wealth of knowledge about the different types of architectural items available for sale.

Architectural salvage companies acquire the items they sell through two primary avenues. People may sell salvaged materials they own or the company may salvage items directly out of a building. According to John Eckley, much of the fun of the architectural salvage business is the hunt for great pieces. He enjoys finding and salvaging the items himself and he also finds this to be more cost effective than going through auctions. During auctions the prices often reflect emotions and not the actual value of a piece.²⁸ The network of people actually doing salvage work is close-knit, so word gets around about buildings that are about to be demolished that have salvageable elements and companies often jump at the chance to get inside.²⁹

In most cases, when a building is slated for demolition, the owner hires a demolition company to come in and take down the building. While not taking the time to work with salvage companies is easier and faster for the demolition company, building owners are starting to recognize the historical, environmental and economic value of some of the materials in a structure and are willing to get a salvage company involved in the process.³⁰ When salvage companies do get involved with a building that is being demolished, they typically purchase the salvage rights to a building. Owning these rights means they can go into a building and pull out resalable items.

²⁸ Cynthia Kriha, "Old Wine, New Bottle: Architectural Salvage Helps Buildings Live On," *The Minnesota Preservationist*, March/April 2009, 9.

²⁹ Rich Ellis (editor of *Architectural Salvage News*) in discussion with the author, September 2011.

³⁰ Jeremy Haines (Deconstruction Sales Manager at Second Chance) in discussion with the author, November 2011.

Cities such as Minneapolis make it a practice to sell the salvage rights to their buildings that are slated for demolition and remove the resalable items before a demolition crew comes in.³¹ Word about a building with salvage rights available spreads quickly to the salvage community through the use of email and networking websites such as *facebook*.

The other side of the architectural salvage market is made up of building material reuse companies. The most well-known organization involved in building material reuse is Habitat for Humanity; many local Habitat chapters run a ReStore in addition to their other work. These not-for-profit ReStores, like architectural salvage companies, vary greatly in the types of materials they sell, but their inventory only comes through donations. Inventory in building material reuse stores will often include new or slightly used items such as lumber, plumbing and flooring materials, surplus materials and furniture. Building material reuse companies focus on a different clientele from the architectural antique dealers and they hold a different set of values as well. The architectural, historical and decorative values of the architectural antique dealers come second for reuse companies behind the economic and environmental value. They are in business to provide affordable materials to people who need them and keep useable materials out of landfills.

A third type of architectural salvage company essentially straddles the line between the architectural antique dealers and the building material reuse companies and, in doing so, shares the values of each type of company. Not-for-profit organizations such as Community Fork Lift in Edmonston, Maryland, and Second Chance provide customers with a range of architectural elements and salvaged

³¹ Kriha, "Old Wine, New Bottle," 9.

materials. Both of these organizations sell salvaged materials that come from deconstruction projects or are donated by individuals which means their inventory consists of unused and old items.

Deconstruction, the process of dismantling a building so that the parts can be reused, is undergoing a resurgence. Throughout the eighteenth-, nineteenth and early twentieth-century, this type of practice was particularly popular in rural areas. Limited access to resources coupled with the high cost of hand hewing or pit sawing wood led owners to deconstruct outbuildings they could no longer use and they would then sell, trade or reuse the parts in new buildings. The chicken house at Bostwick serves as a great example of deconstruction and reuse. This practice also happened in urban areas as Ruth Little noted in her article about middle-class African Americans in Durham, North Carolina.

Within the past twenty years, people have begun to consider deconstruction a viable alternative to demolition, and this has expanded with the growing sustainability movement. Today if a building is slated for demolition, increasingly, people acknowledge that the building and the materials inside of it may still be useful. Building contractors can reuse piping, floor joists, windows and many other elements of the building in future projects. According to Jeremy Haines, the deconstruction sales manager at Second Chance, more and more building owners are discovering the advantages of hiring a deconstruction crew to dismantle and cart off a building instead of taking a wrecking ball to the building and destroying useable material. Depending on the region of the country, disposal fees for building waste are so high

that taking the extra time to deconstruct a building has economic value.³² Property owners receive a financial benefit in the form of a tax deduction when they donate the materials from the deconstruction to an organization such as Second Chance. Also, new construction projects can receive LEED points if a certain volume of the material from the building previously on the site is reused or recycled instead of put in a land fill.³³ In addition to the economic and environmental value owners get from deconstruction there is also a social value associated with the practice. Many property owners gain peace of mind knowing they did what they could to limit the amount of waste going into landfills. Organizations such as Second Chance and the Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit take the social value of deconstruction one step further. These organizations are interested in salvaging useable materials, but they are also interested in doing workforce development and job training for people who struggle to find a good job with a living wage.

Building owners interested in purchasing from an architectural salvage company, donating to a building reuse organization, or hiring a deconstruction firm generally need look no further than their own town. Even if that is not the case, deconstruction firms will travel for the right project and a weekend trip to a salvage company may yield a homeowner just the right architectural element to complete a restoration or liven up a room.

Before moving on to discuss how people use architectural salvage and what troubles preservationists about the practice, it is important to consider why people are

³²Bob Beaty (owner of Provenance) in discussion with the author, November 2011.

³³ *LEED 2009 for New Construction and Major Renovations with Alternative Compliance Paths for Projects Outside the U.S.* (Washington, DC: US Green Building Council, 2009), 54, <http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=8868>.

so interested in the practice. For some the attraction is saving an item from going into a landfill and for others it is the hunt to find a unique item at a great price. For almost everyone who crosses the threshold of Materials Unlimited or enters the warehouses of Second Chance a large part of the draw is seeing history right before your eyes in the form of an eighteenth-century wooden railing, a Victorian mantelpiece or Craftsman light fixture. History is attractive to people, and so beautiful and interesting architectural elements from the past are appealing. According to David Lowenthal in *The Past is a Foreign Country* people are nostalgic for the past because they believe it was better then than it is now.³⁴ This theory can be applied to architecture and architectural elements as well. Much of the new construction today has a cookie cutter feeling about it because the elements that make up the building are coming off the shelf of local home improvement stores. When people see hand carved built-in shelving units from a bygone era or brass hinges and door knobs in an architectural antique shop they become wistful for a time when items were higher quality and had more style. In the article “How Much is a Piece of the True Cross Worth?” Brooke Hindle writes about the importance of material culture and how touching historic objects and considering the past through these objects provides people a connection with the past they do not get through reading about the past.³⁵ I find I am attracted to architectural salvage not because I believe the past to be a better time but because I am intrigued with being able to own something that so many people have interacted with before I had the chance to touch it. Each of these

³⁴ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 7.

³⁵ Brooke Hindle, “How Much Is a Piece of the True Cross Worth?” in *Material Culture and the Study of American Life*, ed. Ian M.G. Quimby (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1978), 6.

architectural elements represent the history of countless people and I really like being able to reflect on people from other times and other places when I look at these elements.

Summary

The architectural salvage business today is thriving and provides something for everyone who is interested in building elements. Architectural antique dealers sell high quality, unique and historic elements which they salvage from buildings that are about to be demolished or purchase from collectors. Building material reuse companies on the other hand sell at very affordable prices unused and slightly used materials which are donated to them. In the middle of the spectrum are non-profits who sell high-end items as well as left over building materials and they get their inventory in a number of ways. They may purchase it from collectors, salvage a few pieces from a building before it is demolished, or deconstruct an entire building and resell or recycle whatever they can. One of the main values that keeps people buying architectural salvage and keeps dealers collecting and selling the items is an interest in history. More of the values held by people who support architectural salvage and the historic preservationists who are concerned with the practice will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Values in Architectural Salvage

So often when people hear the word value they assume monetary value, but an item can have many values beyond its cost depending on who is looking at it. For one person a house may hold historic value because of its age, another person may see the house as having architectural value because it is a great example of a particular period and yet another person may value a house as a home to raise a family in. In Randall Mason's article "Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation, he describes these different values as essentially characteristics.³⁶ Based on the importance of each of these characteristics an item may have more value for one person than another. Mason promotes values-centric preservation as a way to understand the conflicting and changing values people hold.³⁷ In this and the following chapters, I will consider the different values held by supporters of architectural salvage and historic preservationists and make some recommendations on how the practice can be altered to better serve each side.

Everyone who purchases an item from an architectural salvage company sees some type of value in the item (Table 1). They may want to replace damaged or missing elements of an historic building (use, historic, architectural, aesthetic and economic value), alter an addition to make it reflect the time period of the original building (use, historic, architectural, aesthetic, uniqueness and aesthetic value), purchase an old window which they will turn into a picture frame (use, historical, uniqueness and decorative value) or find something unique for their newly

³⁶ Randall Mason, "Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation," *CRM* 3, no. 2 (2006), 22.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

constructed home (use, historical, uniqueness and decorative value). Still others value the practice because it prevents reusable materials from being destroyed and adding to the staggering amount of construction and demolition waste created each year.

Value	Why?
Use	After items are salvaged, they can be reused for their intended purpose or they are repurposed and given a new use.
Historical	People want to buy items with a documented history; they like being able to tell their friends where items came from.
Architectural	The prized architectural elements people would want to salvage stand as a testament to great architects and craftsman of the past. This value is only maintained if the item is removed from a building before it is demolished.
Uniqueness	People want to buy one-of-a-kind items for their homes.
Aesthetic	Salvaged materials from the same period as the house can create a cohesive feeling that was lost during prior renovations.
Decorative	Many salvaged items are so attractive people install the item as a decorative focal point for a space.
Green/ Environmental	By reusing materials, one can prevent them from going into a landfill there by decreasing the amount of building waste produced in this country and decreasing the environmental cost of making new elements.
Economic	Using salvaged materials is less expensive than creating reproductions in many cases and the salvage materials are often made of higher quality than can be obtained today (i.e. old growth lumber).

Table 1: Architectural Salvage Values

In the case of a homeowner in Minneapolis, she found use, architectural and economic value when she purchased salvaged materials to restore the inside of her early twentieth-century bungalow. During a mid-century remodel, many of the architectural details were removed from the house including cove molding, a beveled glass mirror, and a wooden colonnade which separated the living room and dining room. When the homeowner decided to restore the interior of the house, her contractor encouraged her to search salvage shops for a colonnade from the right

period and in the right style for the house. The contractor also inspected the colonnade before she bought it to make sure it was appropriate for the house and would fit in the space. Salvaged base cap which matched the original in the house was installed and after staining the colonnade the project was complete. Installing the colonnade and other missing features in the house made it a cozier place and the salvaged colonnade cost the homeowner \$2,000 less than buying a reproduction.³⁸

Another example is the homeowner who chooses to replace a broken wood window with vinyl and then a new owner comes along and wants to install a wood window again to maintain the historic feeling of the house. In this case, the values that the homeowner may be considering include use, historical, architectural and aesthetic. Finding an entire set of the correct wood windows at a salvage shop may be impossible, but it is definitely possible to find one or two at a time that are of the right style, size and vintage for the house. These are just two examples of how homeowners and building owners use salvaged items to replace elements that have been damaged beyond repair over time or were removed from a building during a prior renovation.

Salvaged materials can also be useful when dealing with an addition to a building that is not complementary to the original house, and the values to consider in this situation are use, historical, architectural and aesthetic. According to the ninth standard of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, an addition to a building "shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the

³⁸ Tom Guelcher, "New Home for a Bungalow Colonnade," *Old-House Journal*, January/February 2002, 64-67.

integrity of the property and its environment.”³⁹ For an example of using salvage to make an addition compatible with the original building consider Catherine Lundie’s 1780 farm house in New York. The house had an 1838 addition, and a more recent mid-twentieth-century kitchen addition. This later addition with its sliding glass doors and walls of windows did not match the feeling of the historic portion of the house and Ms. Lundie “decided that judicious use of architectural salvage could help the newer part of the house “talk” to the old.”⁴⁰ They replaced the sliding glass doors and stationary plate glass windows on either side of the hyphen with Georgian Revival doors and divided light windows flanking each. Although some would argue these pieces are not from the same period as the house so they do not belong, the owners feel giving the hyphen similar window proportions as the rest of the house and installing swinging doors has made the addition feel more like a part of the house.

Another thing Ms. Lundie decided to do in her house is use cast iron columns to create a visual separation between two rooms. Use, historical, decorative and uniqueness value are all relevant to this project. Many people buy architectural elements for this exact purpose. They are looking for unique elements to set their house apart by serving as an art or conversation piece. It is likely that no one else in Ms. Lundie’s town has cast iron columns in their home from the J.L. Hudson building in downtown Detroit.⁴¹

Irreplaceable Artifacts is just one of a number of coffee table books that show lovers of architectural building elements and do-it-yourselfers how they can use

³⁹ “Standards for Rehabilitation,” *National Park Service*, accessed October 25, 2011, www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_standards.htm.

⁴⁰ Catherine Lundie, “Salvage Transitions,” *Old-House Interiors*, Oct 2008, 45.

⁴¹ Ibid.

salvaged materials to decorate their homes. Carved limestone caryatids, which were removed from a building in Manhattan before its demolition, make wonderful garden sculptures.⁴² By adding a wooden frame to an art-deco ventilator grille, a designer can create a very stylish and unique headboard for a bed.⁴³ In *Salvage Style: 45 Home & Garden Projects Using Reclaimed Architectural Details*, the authors provide instructions for turning balusters into candleholders (Figure 10).⁴⁴ Each of these types of projects provide use, historical, decorative, and uniqueness value for the owner. Above are just a few examples of how creative people have decorated their homes using one-of-a-kind architectural elements, and as long as the elements are available, people will find new and interesting ways to use them.

Figure 10 - Baluster candleholders. Source: www.mylifetime.com.

The green/environmental value of architectural salvage has not been mentioned in the preceding examples because for some people it is not a driving value when they chose to purchase salvaged items, but it is a positive byproduct of any salvage project and should be explored. Every element that goes into a building has embodied energy. Take for example a piece of wood trim – energy was spent to cut down a tree, design a pattern, cut and shape the piece of wood and transport it. If the piece of trim is just discarded into a landfill instead of salvaged, all the energy invested in creating it will be lost. Energy is wasted in so many other ways on a daily

⁴² Leslie Blum, *Irreplaceable Artifacts: Decorating the Home with Architectural Ornament* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1997), 19.

⁴³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁴ Joe Rhatigan and Dana Irwin, *Salvage Style: 45 Home & Garden Projects Using Reclaimed Architectural Details* (New York: Lark Books, 2001), 70.

basis that any time someone can recognize the embodied energy in an item and save that item they benefit the environment.

Each year construction and demolition debris make up an astonishing 30 to 40% of the material dumped into landfills. What is even more surprising is that only 9% of that debris comes from new construction. The rest of the debris is the result of demolition and renovation projects and with the proper care most of this material could be reused instead of put into a landfill. According to Bob Faulk, a co-author of *Unbuilding: Salvaging the Treasures of Unwanted Houses*, each year in the United States about 250,000 1,000 sq. ft. houses are demolished. If these buildings are deconstructed instead of demolished in the traditional way, not everything in the building could be salvaged but most of the lumber could be, and it could be used to build 75,000 2,000 sq. ft. houses.⁴⁵

In the case of deconstruction, an entire building is taken apart and some materials are reused, others are recycled and some must be sent to a landfill. Even if some items end up in a landfill, much less material is going than if traditional demolition is used and all the salvageable materials in the building are destroyed in that process. Some might make the argument that salvage dealers who only salvage select pieces from a building instead of deconstructing the entire building are not making a positive impact, but I disagree. It may be a small step, but every item that is salvaged and not sent to a landfill that is a step towards reducing the amount of waste this country produces. Also, each time someone sees a salvaged item being used and recognizes that that item with all its embodied energy could have been destroyed or

⁴⁵ Katherine Salant, "Deconstructing an Old Home Can Give You Building Blocks for a New One," *Washington Post* (Washington, DC), December 13, 2008.

given a new life, it may make them think harder before they send building materials and architectural elements to a landfill.

Summary

There are so many values associated with architectural salvage and each person who sells and buys these items has different values that are most important to them. For some people the historic and architectural values of an element are most important. They like to know who built a particular element, where it was first installed and who may have come into contact with it during its use. Other people value architectural salvage because the elements serve as unique and decorative pieces of art that attract people's attention or the element has an aesthetic value that ties together different rooms in a house. Still others consider the environmental and economic values of salvaged elements when they choose to use these elements. Reusing an item means it does not go into a landfill, it is often made of higher quality material than items made today and salvaged items often cost less than having a craftsman make a reproduction. No matter which values salvage sellers and buyers find most important there are also preservation values to be considered to make sure the practice is the best it can be.

Chapter 5: Preservation Values

By using architectural salvage historic building owners have a treasure trove of items that can serve as decoration or replace damaged and lost elements in a building, but it is important to consider how this practice fits in with the prevailing ideas and philosophies in historic preservation. The discussion about reuse in preservation has been ongoing since the preservation movement first started. John Ruskin, an English art critic, argued in 1849 that historic buildings should be preserved as a testament to past generations and as a gift for future generations. Ruskin wanted to see all buildings cared for, but he did not believe in restoration of a building if it had not been maintained.⁴⁶ Just a few years later, Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, a French architect, expressed a completely different opinion. Viollet-le-Duc was in full support of restoring buildings because he believed doing so could make the building more complete.⁴⁷ Writing in 1877, William Morris, a founder of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, expressed his dislike for the idea of restoration. Like Ruskin, he worried that during a restoration portions of the building would be removed and with them would go the complete history of the building.⁴⁸ Even though these writers disagreed on how to do it, they each believed that it was important for society to maintain its historic buildings and preservationists are still fighting for that idea today.

⁴⁶ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1961), 185.

⁴⁷ Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc*, ed. M. F. Hearn (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990), 269.

⁴⁸ William Morris, *William Morris on Architecture*, ed. Chris Miele (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 1996), 54.

Value	Why?
Use	Use value is only present if the item is used as it was original intended.
Historical	Historical value is present only if the item is left where it was first installed. If it is salvaged, it can lose its context and can lose its history.
Architectural	The prized architectural elements people would want to salvage stand as a testament to great architects and craftsman of the past and this value can be lost if the item is taken out of its original context .
Aesthetic	This value can be lost when a salvaged item is reused in a house of the wrong period and style. The item can present a false sense of history to viewers.
Social/Cultural	An historic building may have important social and cultural value if it is the only remaining aspect of an event, place or person and if the building is harmed this value may be lost.

Table 2: Historic Preservation Values

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (Standards) guide much of the historic preservation work done in this country. There are four sets of Standards which are consulted based on the type of treatment being applied – Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration and Reconstruction. The Preservation treatment “places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair.”⁴⁹ Rehabilitation projects are similar to preservation projects but they often call for the replacement of more materials because of the deteriorated state of the building and its adaptive reuse. If an owner chooses to do a restoration treatment on a property, she must choose in consultation with historic preservation specialists a specific and relevant period in the building’s history and restore the building to the way it looked then. This treatment

⁴⁹ “Introduction: Choosing an Appropriate Treatment of the Historic Building,” *National Park Service*, accessed October 25, 2011, http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose_treat.htm.

may require removing later changes to the building in order to make the building look as it once did.⁵⁰ Reconstruction, the least used type of treatment, “is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.”⁵¹

According to the National Park Service, “The Standards are neither technical nor prescriptive, but are intended to promote responsible preservation practices that help protect our Nation's irreplaceable cultural resources.”⁵² Federal agencies doing work on any of their properties must follow the Standards and building owners must follow the Standards in order to receive any Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Many state governments and local historic districts have adopted the Standards as well as a tool to judge the type of work that should be completed on an historic property. Because the Standards guide so much of the historic preservation work on buildings in the United States, it is important to consider the relationship of the Standards to architectural salvage.

When I started to think closely about architectural salvage and wonder how the practice is viewed by preservationists, I turned to the Standards to see if they made any mention of the practice and if salvaged materials could be used in historic preservation projects. Of the four treatments, Rehabilitation is the only one that includes any reference to the practice. According to Anne Grimmer who works for

⁵⁰ “Restoration: The Approach,” *National Park Service*, accessed October 25, 2011, http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/restore/restore_approach.htm.

⁵¹ “Reconstructing,” *National Park Service*, accessed October 25, 2011, http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/reconstruct/reconstruct_index.htm.

⁵² “Introduction: Choosing an Appropriate Treatment of the Historic Building.”

the Technical Preservation Services at the National Park Service, salvaged materials could not be used in Preservation, Restoration or Reconstruction. In each of those treatments it would be expected that all materials would be new so that someone could differentiate between what is original and what is not. With the Rehabilitation treatment, salvaged materials could be used in certain situations.⁵³

Rehabilitation, the most often used treatment method, “emphasizes the retention and repair of historic materials, but more latitude is provided for replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to work.”⁵⁴ The Rehabilitation Standards #3 and #6 relate to the issue of architectural salvage and #3 in particular takes a clear stance on the use of some salvaged materials. Rehabilitation Standard 3 states that “Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.”⁵⁵ Rehabilitation Standard 6 explains that “Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.”⁵⁶

Although on the first read-through of Rehabilitation Standard 3, it sounds as though the use of all salvaged materials is prohibited that is not the case. The key

⁵³ Anne Grimmer (Technical Preservation Services) in interview with author, December 2011.

⁵⁴ “Introduction: Choosing an Appropriate Treatment of the Historic Building.”

⁵⁵ “Standards for Rehabilitation.”

⁵⁶ “Standards for Rehabilitation.”

word in that statement is “conjectural.” The Standards prohibit the use of salvaged materials when they would “create a false sense of historical development,” but not all salvaged materials would do this. Rehabilitation Standard #6 requires that replacement pieces “be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence” and if the evidence can be provided to support the use of particular salvaged elements they may be approved. The benefit of using salvaged elements is that they will match better in design, color, texture and material than reproductions produced today.

Anne Grimmer provided two examples where salvaged materials may be permitted. If a few bricks in a building needed to be replaced and the owner found bricks from the same manufacturer and of the same color and time period, they would be allowed. Also if one interior door in a house was missing and photographs or other evidence proved that a salvaged door was the same as the missing door it could be approved. The use of salvage in rehabilitation projects that must meet the Standards would need to be approved on a case by case basis to make sure that people are not using salvage to give a false impression of the past.

The most pressing concern I heard from people at the education session on architectural salvage at the National Trust Conference this autumn was that salvaging an architectural element removed it from its original context and its history would be lost. This is a very real concern with the practice of salvage and there is not a preservationist around who is not concerned with context and how people understand particular elements of a building. John Harris provides a great example of how context can be lost in his book *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvage*. According to Harris, many houses are designed with a specific flow in mind, and in

order to understand a room and all of its decorations, it needs to be seen in conjunction with other rooms in the house.⁵⁷ When entire rooms or even particular elements within a room are removed, they no longer have that connection with the rest of the house and the intrinsic meaning of the decorations is lost. Altering salvaged elements to fit into a new environment can also cause loss of context and integrity. Often when entire rooms are installed in a new location, entryways and even window openings need to be added or altered to make the room meet code or fit into its new home. Beyond losing the connection between the moved room and the others in its original location, altering any aspect of the moved room changes how people feel in the room and how they interpret what should be done in the room.

When an architectural element is removed from its original context and placed in a new location, the integrity of the element can be lost as well. In the case of the bungalow in Minnesota mentioned in the previous chapter, the colonnade she purchased for her home was too large. The contractor had to cut it down to the proper size to fit in the room and now it can no longer be seen as it was intend to be seen. By trying to return the interior of her home to its original look, the owner forever altered the context of the home. The renovations that happened throughout the lifetime of the home were wiped away and with that a portion of the history of the house was hidden away. Building owners can do what they like to their buildings within reason but it is important to note salvaged materials do not just run the risk of losing their context when they are reinstalled, but their new location may lose some of its context as well.

⁵⁷ Harris, *Moving Rooms*, 3.

Historic preservationists strive to present an accurate picture of the past for present and future generations by documenting and preserving the built environment and cultural landscapes. No one wants to see the general public deceived and led to believe something false. Ada Huxtable, an architecture critic, worries about the duping of the American public by intermixing originals, reproductions and reconstructions in her book *The Unreal America*, and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards state that this as a very real concern in the Rehabilitation Standards.⁵⁸ Participants at the education session on architectural salvage at the National Preservation Conference argued this is exactly what happens when salvaged materials are used in restorations as well as in new construction. By putting a salvaged window, door, mantelpiece or any other architectural element into a new location, the property owner is effectively creating a false sense of history.

The following examples will show how this intended or unintended consequence can happen. The owner of a Victorian period house, who likes sharp lines, falls in love with an Arts and Crafts style mantel at a salvage shop and has the mantel installed in his home. To a person with a trained eye it would be clear that the mantel was not original to the period the house was built. Without further investigation and questioning the homeowner, the untrained visitor would not be able to tell if the mantel was installed in the early twentieth-century when it was first built or if it was a salvaged item and had a history before it was installed in this house. Someone not well versed in architectural styles could be lead to believe this Arts and Crafts mantel is correct for the period of the house and they would walk away with a false impression of the Victorian style.

⁵⁸ Ada Louise Huxtable, *The Unreal America* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 83.

Even if a homeowner researches the history of her house and its architectural style and is confident she is doing an accurate restoration, she can still convey a false sense of history. The decorative architectural elements from a Federal period Philadelphia townhouse are different from what one would find in a rural house from the same period.⁵⁹ Only detailed research and a thorough knowledge of the period and location of the house could prevent a homeowner from installing the wrong type of details during a restoration. Even if the homeowner picked architectural elements from the right period and location, she would need to be careful not to install elements in rooms that never had them. Installing ornate paneling in the basement or upper floors, which were originally used only by the servants and probably did not have this type of detailing, would provide a false sense of history.⁶⁰ The use of salvaged materials in a restoration could even cause confusion for future researchers. Depending on which salvaged items are used and how they are installed a researcher may be fooled into believing on first inspection that the salvaged items are actually original. If this type of deception whether intended or unintended occurred in a house museum, people would have every right to be concerned because they visit these museums expecting to get an accurate impression of the past. Presenting this type of false information in a private home is a much less serious concern because the homeowner does not intend to educate the general public but instead wants to reflect her personal likes and values through the décor in the home.

⁵⁹ Carol Rosier, "Architectural Salvage: Historic Tradition or Chronological Confusion?" *CRM*, no. 5 (1994): 15.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Summary

The biggest concerns historic preservationists have with the practice of architectural salvage are that an item will lose its historical and architectural value when it is removed from its original context and that using salvaged elements can create a false sense of history for observers. Each of these concerns are valid and it is easy to see how the history of a salvaged element can be lost if a seller and purchaser are not careful or how a homeowner could mislead someone by mixing up pieces from different periods within a house. Not all buildings can be preserved and so the question becomes what can be done to reconcile the differences between salvage supporters and preservationists, so that whatever elements can be saved are saved?

Chapter 6: Analysis and Conclusions

Architectural salvage is a multi-faceted issue and there are many concerns about the practice that need to be addressed before preservationists will begin to see it in a new light. This chapter addresses the concern about salvage encouraging salvage and the black market side of salvage that is worrisome to people on both sides of the issue. I will also analyze preservationists' concern about "creating a false sense of history" and the chapter will conclude with recommendations for addressing all of these concerns.

Values Analysis

As shown in the previous two chapters, even though preservationists and salvagers hold similar values in name, they conflict about what is important in regards to the particular values. Both groups can agree that building elements have historical value. For preservationists that value is present in an item when it is in its original context and is seen in relation with all the other elements in the building. People who use salvage see historical value in the items because they were used by other people in another time and at another place. The historical value is made even stronger when full documentation for the element is available and the purchaser can then share that story with people who see the item in its new location.

Architectural value is present in building elements as well. Preservationists and salvagers can agree that building elements, especially unique and high quality elements, are great examples of the work of designers and craftspeople.

Preservationists worry if these wonderful elements with high architectural value are

removed from where they were first used that value will be lost because the element's history and its context will be lost. Proponents of salvage recognize the architectural value of elements, but for them the main concern is making sure these items are available for future generations. If a building is demolished and the special architectural elements are not removed, these items will forever be lost and no one else will be able to know their value.

Does Salvage Encourage Salvage?

Over the last thirty years, the popularity of salvaging architectural elements and using salvaged items has increased. Coffee table books filled with pictures of how people used these elements to renovate or decorate their homes abound. Television shows such as *Trading Space*, *The Picker Sisters* and *American Pickers* show people on a weekly basis what types of items can be salvaged and how to use these items to decorate a home. With the general public being introduced to the practice of salvage through books and television shows, the question arises as to whether salvage encourages salvage? According to Scotty James, the general manager at Materials Unlimited, his company is only called in to salvage material from a building after the final decision has been made to renovate or raze a building. If the materials are not taken out of a building at that time, they would be lost forever, and since the materials have been saved through salvage it only makes sense that they be reused. So in this situation ongoing demolitions encourage salvage, but salvage is not the primary goal of demolishing the building.

Most of the participants at the National Trust conference argued that salvage encouraged salvage. They were of the mindset that if people purchased salvaged items and used the items in restoration projects or as decorative objects more people would get interested in salvage and more buildings would be destroyed. The Cleveland Restoration Society, an historic preservation organization in northeast Ohio, ran a salvage shop as part of their operation, but eventually closed the business because they could not reconcile the conflicting values of preservation and salvage. Many other preservation groups, such as the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans and Preservation Greensboro in North Carolina, have been able to reconcile their historic preservation missions and their salvage businesses. In the case of Preservation Greensboro, their salvage company Architectural Salvage of Greensboro nets between \$20,000 and \$25,000 annually. The profits from the business are immediately invested back into the organization and help them continue preservation efforts in the community.⁶¹ Even though salvagers and those opposed to the practice disagree about how much salvage encourages salvage, they both agree that there is a very negative side to the practice.

The Black Market

The increased popularity of salvaged items has led to increasingly high prices for some items which in turn have led to the development of the illegal trade and sale of architectural elements. In this black market, thieves and unscrupulous business owners steal items from vacant and occupied buildings and then sell the items in

⁶¹ Amanda Kolson Hurley, "This Old Stuff: Architectural Salvage Enters the Mainstream," *Preservation Magazine*, July/August 2006, 25.

order to make a profit. Almost everyone in the historic preservation and salvage fields has a story about how they ran across the black market side of architectural salvage.

At the architectural salvage workshop at the National Trust conference, an audience member relayed to the group how mission style outdoor light fixtures were stolen off a neighbor's house in the middle of the night. When I recently visited Materials Unlimited, a woman was in the shop to look at front doors and door knobs because hers needed to be replaced. Between purchasing her house and moving in, thieves broke through the solid oak front door and stole all the glass door knobs as well as the furnace. This woman was shocked to find out that a glass door knob set sells for \$25 and up at Materials Unlimited and she needed to buy a whole house's worth to replace what was stolen. This sort of theft happens all the time in cities such as Detroit, MI, and Camden, NJ. Thieves pull out copper, doors, moldings and more from abandoned houses because they do not think anyone cares and they will not get caught. In St. Louis, vandals set abandoned brick houses on fire, and when the fire department responds, the fire fighters must knock out entire sections of wall to make sure the fire is completely out. After the fire department leaves, the vandals return, collect the bricks and then sell them in other cities where the high quality bricks are in demand.⁶² It is this type of behavior that gives anti-salvage people a rallying point for why salvage should not be encouraged and leaves many interested in purchasing salvaged items wondering who they can trust.

⁶² Malcolm Gay, "Thieves Cart Off St. Louis Bricks," *New York Times* (New York, NY), September 19, 2010.

Each salvage company has its own way of dealing with stolen material. At Provenance, almost all of their inventory comes from deconstruction projects they conduct, so they know the origin of the materials. Scotty James at Materials Unlimited said people come to the shop once in a while wanting to sell items of questionable origins. It is fairly easy to figure out who they should and should not purchase from and they avoid doing business with people who are known to deal in stolen items. In the past when they have purchased illegally obtained items, Materials Unlimited did all they could to return the stolen items to the rightful owner.

In order to curb the problem of black market architectural salvage, the Indiana state government enacted a law in 2008 requiring salvage dealers to keep records of who they purchase items from and barring them from purchasing items that appear to be obtained illegally.⁶³ This law is a good first step in curbing this serious problem, but some worry that state laws will do little because criminals will just sell the items in other states with less restrictive laws.⁶⁴ Other ways to limit the sale of illegal items include getting salvage dealers to commit to a code of ethics, such as the one dealers in England have voluntarily signed.⁶⁵ Also, historic preservation organizations should encourage people interested in purchasing salvage to only buy from reputable dealers.⁶⁶ If everyone from police to salvage dealers to customers make an effort, the number of illegal items being sold will decrease and the practice of architectural salvage will not be considered so questionable.

⁶³ "Second Regular Session 115th General Assembly (2008)," *State of Indiana*, accessed October 12, 2011, <http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2008/HE/HE1062.1.html>.

⁶⁴ Catherine Siskos, "Parts with a Pedigree," *Old-House Journal*, May/June 2007, 43.

⁶⁵ Hurley, "Old Stuff," 24.

⁶⁶ Siskos, "Parts with a Pedigree," 43.

Rejecting a “False Sense of History”

As outlined in the proceeding chapters, the use of architectural salvage comes down to a question of values: which values people hold and which should be respected. People who are against the use of salvaged materials argue that by removing an item from its original location the item can no longer be viewed in the context it was meant to be and using salvaged items creates a false sense of history. Both of these arguments are flawed because time does not stand still and structures are ever changing objects. The chicken house at Bostwick is a great example of this fact. In the past, people deconstructed buildings that no longer met their needs and used the timbers to build the chicken house as joinery marks on the wood show us. What this means for us today is we are not seeing the timbers in their “original” context, but are instead seeing them in their second or even third actual context.

You would not begrudge a nineteenth-century farmer who wanted to rebuild his barn to better meet his needs his right to do so. Preservationists would not tell a the owner of a newly constructed house that she cannot renovate the house as styles change because one day the house might be historic and when that time comes the house should be as it was when it was first built. So why begrudge present day house owners decorative elements from the past that would have been destroyed had they not been salvaged? By objecting to the use of salvaged materials, preservationists are saying an architectural element is only significant if it is seen where they have

deemed it to be significant. This mindset prevents preservationists from recognizing that items can gain significance each time they are reused.⁶⁷

In a world with limited resources and for people with limited amounts of money, it only made sense to reuse materials instead of buying new. So what does this mean for the question of context? The timbers are no longer being used as they first were used and so that original context is gone. Should the owners of Bostwick not have made this change when they needed it because in the future people would not understand the original context of the framing elements? The answer is no. They should have been allowed to do what they needed to and the same applies to items that are reused today.

This change and evolution of a house should not stop just because a building is deemed historic. If we were to hold a building at a certain point in time, it could very quickly no longer meet anyone's needs and cease to be used. Buildings need to be used and maintained or else they will eventually fall into disrepair and be of no use to anyone. Both Ruskin and Morris argue for the ongoing maintenance of buildings in order to preserve them for future generations.⁶⁸ Preservationists must remember not every house is a time capsule of one very particular period and style and so they should not be treated as such. An 1890s Victorian house may have a 1930s art deco inspired addition because at the time the owner needed more space and like the new style. Historic preservationists cannot and should not be "design police." If someone wants to put salvaged items in their home they should be able to do just that.

⁶⁷ Alison K. Hoagland, "Industrial Housing and Vinyl Siding: Historical Significance Flexibly Applied," in *Preservation of What, for Whom?: A Critical Look at Historical Significance*, ed. Michael A. Tomlin (Ithaca, NY: National Council for Preservation Education, 1999), 122.

⁶⁸ Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 186.
Morris, *William Morris on Architecture*, 53.

However, these homeowners can follow a few simple rules to ensure these elements are salvaged and added in the most appropriate way possible.

Best Practices

People have always used salvaged materials and they will continue the process well into the future regardless of the views of preservation purists. Thus in order to ensure they use the best materials for a specific project and use them properly, both building owners and salvage dealers should keep few things in mind. Salvage dealers should provide purchasers with as much information about a piece as they can. Most of the high-end salvage companies I have visited list an approximate manufacture date and where the item was salvaged from if they have that information. Materials Unlimited staff tries to research the history of a piece before selling it, so they can provide detailed information with any item they sell. All salvage companies should make it a point to provide as much information as possible to a customer because people enjoy knowing as much about an item as they can, and being able to tell visitors about a salvaged item in their home is half the fun. Also, if customers have this information, they can continue the research on their own if they would like.

Along with educating customers about particular items they are considering, salvage dealers can work with customers to pick out the right items for their homes. Some people buy a particular item because they like the look of it and they do not care whether or not it matches the style of the house. In those cases the salvage dealer can be helpful by making sure the owner is aware of what is required to install the mantel piece, chandelier or whatever the object may be. On the other hand if a

customer is looking for a period piece to match the style of her house, salvage dealers with a knowledge of architectural styles can point the customer to the right pieces and help to steer her away from picking pieces that would not be appropriate for the house. Even if the dealer cannot suggest the right piece for a customer, the dealer could recommend some books the customer could review before making a final decision.⁶⁹

Once a customer purchases a salvaged item she can do a couple of things to ensure there is no confusion later on about these elements. Each salvaged item should be marked in some way on the back, so future owners can easily identify salvaged pieces and original pieces upon close inspection. Secondly, the building owner should create a restoration log book which can be passed on to future owners.⁷⁰ In addition to including research about the salvaged items and their location within the building, the log could include detailed information on all maintenance and restoration work completed. By taking one or all of these steps dealers can make sure customers are happy and owners can make sure the history of a particular items is not lost.

Conclusion

Although I consider myself an optimist, I am also a pragmatist and so I recognize that as historic preservationists and activists we will not be able to save every historic building. Some buildings need to come down because they are beyond repair and others may be demolished because the owner thinks this is best. Whatever

⁶⁹ Roister 16

⁷⁰ Rosier, "Architectural Salvage," 15.

the reason for razing a building it is important to salvage items from the building for many reasons. The carved wood paneling in a house about to come down may be a prime example of a particular style and exist nowhere else in the world. If materials are not salvaged, they will end up in the landfill and contribute to the growing amount of waste thrown away each year. People like connecting with the past and using salvaged materials to decorate their home is one way they can make that connection. There are problems with the practice such as the fact that when objects are removed from their original location their history can be lost and people can unintentionally create a false sense of history by putting items from one period in a house from another period. Documenting the history of salvaged items, marking them as salvaged and documenting where they are placed in buildings can alleviate some of the concern about the practice. For thousands of years, people have found benefits in the practice of architectural salvage and there is little chance that people will stop seeing value in the practice in the future. In order to ensure salvage is done in the best ways possible, salvagers and preservationists need to stop seeing themselves as adversaries and instead work together to save pieces of history.

Bibliography

- “About Us.” *Materials Unlimited*. November 15, 2011.
http://www.materialsunlimited.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=27.
- “American Federal Era Period Rooms.” *Metropolitan Museum of Art*. December 10, 2011. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/fede/hd_fede.htm.
- Blum, Leslie. *Irreplaceable Artifacts: Decorating the Home with Architectural Ornament*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1997.
- Coleman, Brian and Dan Mayers. *Extraordinary Interiors: Decorating with Architectural Salvage & Antiques*. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2005.
- Dunlap, David W. “A Quest for Fragments of the Past; Calling Penn Station’s Scattered Remains Back Home.” *New York Times* (New York City, NY), August 16, 1998.
- Ellis, Rich. 2010-11 Guide to Architectural Salvage, Antique Lumber & Garden Antique Companies. Rocky Mount, VA: RKE Publishing LLC, 2010.
- Falk, Bob and Brad Guy. *Unbuilding : Salvaging the Architectural Treasures of Unwanted Houses*. Newtown, CN : Taunton, 2007.
- Gay, Malcolm. “Thieves Cart Off St. Louis Bricks.” *New York Times* (New York, NY), September 19, 2010.
- Guelcher, Tom. “New Home for a Bungalow Colonnade.” *Old-House Journal*, January/February 2002.
- Harris, John. *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Hindle, Brooke. “How Much Is a Piece of the True Cross Worth?” In *Material Culture and the Study of American Life*, edited by Ian M.G. Quimby, 5-20. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1978.
- “History & Mission,” *Strawberry Banke Museum*, December 1, 2011, <http://www.strawberrybanke.org/about-us/mission.html>.
- Hoagland, Alison K. “Industrial Housing and Vinyl Siding: Historical Significance Flexibly Applied.” In *Preservation of What, for Whom?: A Critical Look at Historical Significance*, edited by Michael A. Tomlin, 117-124. Ithaca, NY: National Council for Preservation Education, 1999.

- Hurley, Amanda Kolson. "This Old Stuff: Architectural Salvage Enters the Mainstream." *Preservation Magazine*, July/August 2006.
- Huxtable, Ada Louise. *The Unreal America*. New York: The New Press, 1999.
- "Introduction: Choosing an Appropriate Treatment of the Historic Building." *National Park Service*. Accessed October 25, 2011.
http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose_treat.htm.
- Kinney, Dale. "The Concept of Spoila." In *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, edited by Conrad Rudolph, 233-252. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Kriha, Cynthia. "Old Wine, New Bottle: Architectural Salvage Helps Buildings Live On." *The Minnesota Preservationist*, March/April 2009.
- LEED 2009 for New Construction and Major Renovations with Alternative Compliance Paths for Projects Outside the U.S.* Washington, DC: US Green Building Council, 2009.
<http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=8868>.
- Leroux, Kivi and Neil Seldman. *Deconstruction: Salvaging Yesterday's Buildings for Tomorrow's Sustainable Communities*. Washington, DC: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 2000.
- Litchfield, Michael. *Salvaged Treasures: Designing and Building with Architectural Salvage*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1983.
- Little, M. Ruth. "The Other Side of the Tracks: The Middle-Class Neighborhoods That Jim Crow Built in Early-Twentieth Century North Carolina." In *Exploring Everyday Landscapes*, edited by Annmarie Adams and Sally McMurry, 268-280. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.
- Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Lundie, Catherine. "Salvage Transitions." *Old-House Interiors*, Oct 2008.
- Mason, Randall. "Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation." *CRM* 3, No. 2 (2006).
- Morris, William. *William Morris on Architecture*. Edited by Chris Miele. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 1996.
- Pinney Burge, Laura. "Building Nuggets: Architectural Salvage and the Standards." Presentation at the National Preservation Conference, Buffalo, NY, October 19-22, 2011.

- Plosky, Eric J. "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station: Changing Attitudes Towards Historic Preservation in New York City." Master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999.
- Preservation of What, for Whom? Critical Look At Historical Significance*. Edited by Michael A. Tomlan. Ithica, NY: National Council for Preservation Education, 1997.
- "Reconstructing." *National Park Service*. Accessed October 25, 2011.
http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/reconstruct/reconstruct_index.htm.
- Repovich, Sheri E. "Architectural salvage its use and validity within the preservation field." Master's Thesis, Ball State University, 2009.
- "Restoration: The Approach." *National Park Service*. Accessed October 25, 2011.
http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/restore/restore_approach.htm.
- Rhatigan, Joe and Dana Irwin. *Salvage Style: 45 Home & Garden Projects Using Reclaimed Architectural Details*. New York: Lark Books, 2001.
- Rosier, Carol. "Architectural Salvage: Historic Tradition or Chronological Confusion?" *CRM*, No. 5, 1994.
- Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1961.
- Salant, Katherine. "Deconstructing an Old Home Can Give You Building Blocks for a New One." *Washington Post* (Washington, DC), December 13, 2008.
- Scott, Katherine. "Recycling History: The Case for Architectural Salvage." *The Minnesota Preservationist*, March/April 2009.
- "Second Regular Session 115th General Assembly (2008)." State of Indiana. Accessed October 12, 2011.
<http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2008/HE/HE1062.1.html>.
- Siskos, Catherine. "Parts with a Pedigree." *Old-House Journal*, May/June 2007.
- "Standards for Rehabilitation." *National Park Service*. Accessed October 25, 2011.
www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_standards.htm.
- "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings." *National Park Service*. 2001.
<http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm>.

Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène Emmanuel. *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc*.
Edited by M. F. Hearn. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of
Technology, 1990.

Wassink, Dirk. "New Regulations for Lead Based Paint - Implications for Salvage
and Deconstruction." *BMRA News*, May/June 2010.