

# HISTORIC SANTA FE

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation Monthly Journal JULY 2019







HSFF's former Board Chair Mac Watson speaking at the Annual Garden Party & Members' Meeting at HSFF's El Zaguán, June 27, 2019.

# INSIDE HISTORIC SANTA FE FOUNDATION

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Our mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the historic properties and diverse cultural heritage of the Santa Fe area, and to educate the public about Santa Fe's history and the importance of preservation.

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation held its annual Members' Garden Party on June 27, 2019, and the weather held for a very good turnout. The Board of Directors officially created the Mac Watson Fellowship Program in honor of Mac's long and dedicated service in directing the Foundation on its revived path. Part of that path is this program that will hire graduate students from UNM in the History, Preservation Certificate, Architecture and Museum Studies programs, to research and write nominations to add properties to our Register of Properties Worthy of Preservation. The first property addressed by this new program will be the Dorothy McKibbin House during the fall 2019 semester. Thanks to Mac for his guidance and commitment to the Foundation, and let us celebrate the Mac Watson Fellowship Program.

The speaker at our event was Lisa Roach, the newly appointed Manager of the City of Santa Fe Historic Preservation Division. Her very elegant and wise talk was extremely well received, and we have dedicated this entire eZine to the lecture as it was given, unedited. This is most definitely worth reading.

Find out about our events and sign up for our email newsletter at [historicsantafe.org/events](https://historicsantafe.org/events). Find out about donating and membership at [historicsantafe.org/join-give](https://historicsantafe.org/join-give).

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*Continuity and Connection:*

*Reframing Historic Preservation  
for Santa Fe's Future*

Presented by Lisa Gavioli Roach

at The Historic Santa Fe Foundation 2019 Annual Garden Party  
June 27, 2019

Lisa Roach speaking at the HSFF Garden Party & Members' Meeting, June 27, 2019

Old buildings hold great power. Power to evoke emotion and imagination, to give us a sense of continuity with the past, to make us feel connected with a story from another time, to transcend the present moment, taking us from the physical, the mundane into the intangible, the sacred.

Although I felt this power in so many moments of my youth, from my earliest memories as a child in New Orleans, to visiting my Nonna in Boston, and even my first trip to Santa Fe when I was 12. I knew that old places made me feel something important. But the first time I knew this explicitly, I was working at Mesa Verde National Park. I was 22, freshly out of college in Philadelphia, where I had studied anthropology and religion, and where I had just finished writing my senior thesis on the political uses of ancient places, relics and heritage mythologies to legitimize a brutal totalitarian regime in Baathist Iraq. Having always felt like a stranger in Philly, I drove immediately west upon graduation, feeling the pull of the landscapes of the southwest.

At Mesa Verde, I was assigned to a Save America's Treasures crew charged with documenting in exquisite (and sometimes excruciating) hand-drawn detail the standing ruins in the backcountry, at sites to which the vast majority of park visitors will likely never see and experience. My crew got our feet wet documenting several smaller sites all over the park, at times having to rappel into alcoves in canyon walls in the morning and then ju-

mar our way up and out at the end of our work day. After a few weeks of this, we were assigned one of the true gems of backcountry ruins in the park – Spring House. Spring House is situated in Wikiup Canyon off Long Mesa, miles from the main road of Wetherill Mesa. The site was named for a natural spring (really more like a seep) in the back of a large open alcove around which was built a large room with rare sandstone masonry columns. We set about documenting the site, which had dozens of rooms, at least two kivas, petroglyphs and pictographs, and a tower with painted interior plaster still adhered to centuries old walls. The kind of detailed documentation we were doing would take years to complete, working in pairs for larger walls and solo for smaller ones, we drew each wall of every standing room within no more than a couple of centimeters of error.

You start to feel a lot of things after literally staring at the same wall for two to three weeks at a time, measuring each masonry stone, documenting its finish, its shape, its placement in that course of masonry, noting the color and inclusions in the mud mortar, counting and drawing each chinking stone, placing your hands in the fingerprints left by its builders some thousand years prior. I have never been so directly in contact with the past, imagining the lives of the people who built that place, obsessively ruminating about the decisions they made about why and where and how to build, listening for ancient echoes of laughter, story, song, the beat of foot drums, smelling the smoke of hearths, and feeling the mud between my fingers, watching the golden eagles take flight across the

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canyon, and the mud swallows swirl in a frenzied funnel catching the evening's freshly hatched insects. I was immersed in this place. I was connected to it, not by direct memory of the past but by direct experience of interacting with this place, occupying its rooms, and imagining its inhabitants' lives.

But this place was a ruin, a long-abandoned home that was mostly quiet now, a relic from the distant past, visited only by the occasional ringtail cat drinking from the seep, the bushy-tailed packrats who have become the roomblock's new tenants, and the archaeologist reducing a once vibrant community to line drawings, park service forms, and imaginings.

From Mesa Verde, I went further south to study ancestral Puebloan archaeology at the University of Arizona and to work at the Arizona State Museum. There I analyzed ceramics and pre-Columbian experiments with adobe brick architecture in the western Pueblos of Hopi and Zuni. It was during my time excavating an ancestral Hopi pueblo in northern Arizona that I became fascinated with preservation planning, and subsequently, as a contract archaeologist doing compliance work for tract home development outside of Phoenix, I became increasingly interested in the ways we regulate the conservation of cultural resources, especially in the context of urban development. I ultimately left Tucson and the practice of archaeology, married a Santa Fe local and moved to New Mexico, where I went back to school again to study community and regional planning and historic preservation at UNM.

New Mexico captured me. From day one, I was at home here in a way I hadn't felt since leaving Louisiana at 18. It is a true privilege to live and raise my kids in Santa Fe, to offer them the experience of growing up in the house their father was raised in on Cerro Gordo Road and to now have the distinct honor of working for the City of Santa Fe in a role that is deeply engaging and meaningful to me both personally and professionally. I am humbled and grateful to be right here today, sharing this beautiful evening with all of you.

Santa Fe's historic districts are as exquisite in their aspect as they are alluring in the sentiments they conjure. They are unparalleled treasures of architectural revivalism and

restoration. And they are unique. Growing up in Louisiana, I've always said that wherever I choose to put down roots and raise my family will have to be a place in which I look around and can be nowhere else. But just as the French Quarter struggles with the distinct changes in neighborhood make-up that have come with preservation regulations, over-reliance on tourism for economic development, proliferation of second home ownership and short term rentals, our historic districts are contested places where differing values are confronted, defined



The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, Mara Saxer

almost as much by what has been lost as by what has been saved. Our historic districts struggle to hang on as living neighborhoods, yearning for the sound of children playing in the arroyos and neighbors gossiping over coyote fence-posts, for the many layered textures of home, and the eccentricities of a diverse community. In some respects, they have become curated collections – artifacts of a time gone by and products of the nostalgia and romanticism of centuries past... But what do they mean for us today? And what role will they play in shaping Santa Fe's future? We can't begin to know where we are going without becoming curious about where we've been and where we are today.

So, I want to speak for a moment about the origins of historic preservation in Santa Fe. And I want to start by taking a look at some of the forces converged over a century ago to take a remote, frontier town with a dwindling population and refashion it as one of the world's most distinctive cities.

An examination of historic preservation's roots in Santa Fe would be remiss if we didn't think about the romanticism that framed much of the dialogue around social and urban reform in the US in the early 20th century. A movement that characterized the arts and intellectualism in Europe in the late 18th and 19th century, romanticism placed emphasis on emotion and glorification of the past and nature. It was in part a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the scientific rationalization of nature associated with modernity at the time, and it relied upon apprehension about the present and sought to escape the pitfalls of the modern, rapidly industrializing world through idealization of a noble past and purity of nature. Nostalgia was central to the romantic movement. There was a sentimentality for the past, a yearning for a bygone era that was simpler, more noble, and an underlying be-



belief that the past was better or more “authentic” than the present.

Recent psychological studies of nostalgia reveal that proneness to nostalgic thinking results in improvement of mood, enhanced positive self-regard, feelings of increased social connectedness, and perceptions of meaning for one’s life. All positive things! But... if we can accept that all practices of nostalgia are a form of memory bias, verging on self-deception, often with very positive effects on our psyches and on our sense of connectedness to one another and to a shared past, however idealized, let us also recognize that nostalgia is and has always been a tool used by individuals, communities, and governments to consciously invoke these positive associations, communicate a sense of social stability and belonging. Nostalgia has been used by people in power to alleviate social anxieties, to mask disparities, and to minimize uncertainties, and in extreme cases, it has also been used effectively to persuade groups of people towards belief in political ideologies. (think Hitler, Saddam Hussein).

Amidst this backdrop of romanticism and nostalgia was born the City Beautiful Movement. The City Beautiful Movement was a reform philosophy in North American architecture and urban planning in the 1890s through 1910s that sought beautification and stylistic elevation in cities as a reaction to the urban ills of industrialization (pollution, overcrowding, slums). Its advocates promoted beauty for its own sake but also believed these efforts would create moral and civic virtue among urban populations and would increase social harmony and quality of life. Drawing from European neoclassicism, the City Beautiful Movement centered on ideas of orderly urban development, dignity in architectural and landscape form, and stylistic harmony as a way to inspire the same order, dignity, and harmony socially.

Santa Fe’s early leaders took concepts from the City Beautiful movement and transformed them into the City Different movement, still emphasizing social harmony through harmony of built form, but capitalizing on the unique architectural traditions in Santa Fe and the growing national fascination with Pueblo Indian tourism. The City Different movement was a method of civic reform and a means to turn the tide of population decline as a

result of the bypassing of Santa Fe by the main rail line. (When Santa Fe became the capitol of the new state of New Mexico in 1912, population had been declining steadily for two decades, and it had fewer than 6,000 residents.) At its heart, the formalization of Santa Fe Style and the birth of the City Different movement was about elevating what city leaders at the time saw as truly unique about this place and as highly marketable to a wealthy elite class whom they sought to attract to Santa Fe as tourists and residents. Through a blend of tradition and modernity, City Different proponents sought to transform Santa Fe into a modern city proud of its peculiarities.



Jose Alarid House, Melanie McWhorter

In this manner, Santa Fe became an early leader in the American historic preservation movement. In true “city different” fashion, the newly formed municipal government attempted to regulate historic properties and styles as early as 1912 when most doubted whether regulating architectural design, or land use zoning for that matter, was even legal. The first plan ever adopted by the City of Santa Fe in 1912 asserted “that it should be the duty of all city officials to guard the old streets against any change that will affect their appearance... until proper assurance is given that the architecture will conform exteriorally with the Santa Fe style.” In reviewing this plan at the request of Planning Board Chair H.H. Dorman, noted City Beautiful landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. stated that he doubted “whether any court would hold it to be within the powers of ... a City Council, to impose such an obligation upon the owner of private property ... without provision for the payment of damages.” Dorman continued to push for conformity with Santa Fe Style, even lobbying the new state legislature for design review authority. Though this effort was ultimately unsuccessful and the 1912 Plan never became legally binding, a consensus was emerging among City of Santa Fe and Museum of New Mexico leaders that Spanish-Pueblo and Territorial revivalism at the core of Santa Fe Style would be instrumental in shaping the future of Santa Fe.

Romanticization of Santa Fe’s past and its indigenous, Spanish, and vernacular architectural traditions was foundational to the formalization of Santa Fe Style. In his early descriptions of the origins and tenants of Santa Fe Style, Museum archaeologist Sylvanus Morley described the amazement of the “intrepid” Spaniards upon “finding



the native habitations so large and well-constructed” by the “hands of a highly organized and efficient people.” In his language, we hear echoes of nostalgia, idealization of the past, and notions of order and harmony that he portrayed as intrinsic to Santa Fe’s architectural traditions. In Jesse Nusbaum’s writings about his restoration of the Palace of the Governors in 1913, he described the purpose of his undertaking as an effort to create a “noble monument to the memory of the Spanish founders of the civilization of the Southwest” while eliminating evidence of what he referred to as the “rush, the impatience, the progress” of the Territorial period Greek-Revival embellishments of the late 19th century.

Chris Wilson notes that this removal of more recent architectural accretions along with speculative reconstruction was central to the broader efforts underway to achieve stylistic unity with the newly coined “Santa Fe Style.” Through the 1910s and ‘20s, the movement continue to gain momentum, resulting in in the creation of some of our most treasured tourism-oriented monuments of Santa Fe Style, in the Museum of Fine Arts (1916) and La Fonda (1919), while entire blocks of one-story, Mexican-era courtyard houses around the Plaza were demolished and their residents displaced.

By 1937, the US saw its first local historic districts ordinance in Charleston, South Carolina, and twenty years later, Santa Fe had ours. For more than six decades now, the city has regulated historic preservation and design in its historic districts. I like to imagine that the original creators of Santa Fe Style, who envisioned a Santa Fe characterized by exterior conformity with its tenants, harmony in outward appearance, and this unique brand of romantic, ordered beauty would smile to see its successes. Over the last hundred years, we have succeeded in creating not only harmony but continuity of a regional architectural tradition. In their stylistic unity, our historic districts convey the story of a community who values its cultural heritage and is willing to adhere to highly prescriptive regulations in order to sustain that tradition and the telling of that story.

But not everyone in our community feels that way, and there have been other outcomes as well, some of which we may not like to admit much less look at.... Outcomes that have served to disconnect many from these places that we hold sacred as a community, that represent our

past but also reflect who we are and what we value right here in the present. We are a community that faces significant challenges, from severe housing shortages even as the luxury real estate market booms, to an increasing socio-economic and geographical divide and an economy struggling to diversify itself beyond tourism. We have been successful in preserving continuity of tradition and harmony of built form with historic styles, and for many of us this continues to be a noble endeavor worthy of the great many hoops that my team and I force you all

to jump through. However, what meanings does this practice hold for the large portions of our community that are disconnected from our historic districts and no longer even engaged in conversations about historic preservation except to vilify it. As Max Page aptly said, “Continuity without connection to the meanings embodied in old places is not sufficient.”

As I stand here with the great fortune and enormous task of administering Santa Fe’s historic preservation ordinance, at this unique moment in the history of preservation nationally and locally, I am called to self-reflection and left with a desire for inclusive, community-scale inquiry.

I’ll quote Page again here: “Historic preservation is fundamentally about bringing old places and living people into contact and dialogue. Old places are powerful, and can spur our imagination, our emotions, our sense of connectedness in ways other connections to the past cannot. But this power can be dangerous, leading us to fetishistically focus on preserving the physical fabric of a place as if the past and its emotional and ethical lessons lay in the form.”

I firmly believe that Santa Fe’s greatest assets are our people and our diverse stories. Old buildings are powerful, but without people to tell their stories that inform meaning, we are left with imagination and nostalgia. Our historic districts are sacred contested grounds, where accusations of falsehood and claims to authenticity lead us down paths that often serve to further divide us. In fact, this very notion of authenticity is an offshoot of romanticism and nostalgia that gained increasing prominence in the 20th century. It is a concept that is fundamentally oppositional. The quality of authenticity is a statement of contrast to those things, people, places that are not authentic – it is a binary relationship, which masks the



Sara Melton House, Mara Saxer



shades of gray, the layers of history and association, and the plurality of identity. It creates tidiness where there is inevitable messiness, simplifies what is often extremely complex. Invoking authenticity can be seen as a violent act – one which serves to deny and exclude aspects of history, identity, and community that are hard to reconcile. The predominance of claims to and searches for authenticity, which are ubiquitous in our world today, seem to me a psychological response to identity crisis/loss that is very much connected with globalization and post-industrial technocentricity. We are so disconnected from each other in our world today. We are uprooted and mobile, and at times estranged from a sense of community, personal history, ritual and cultural traditions. Authenticity has become a term we invoke to grasp at something tangible to ground us to place, to connect us to the past or to a more pure state. And in this way, we are participating in a long local tradition of romanticism, and one that is in fact deeply human.

So what of the future of historic preservation here? As one of the early leaders in the national historic preservation movement, Santa Fe has the opportunity to renew its leadership role in national and local debates that have stirred in the last decade around this very question. What I do know is that although I don't necessarily have the answers, I believe that the best path forward begins by asking the right questions and by creating inclusive opportunities for dialogue.

Our community is vastly different now than when our local preservation initiatives began a century ago and our ordinance was passed over six decades ago. Do we still know our purpose? Are our regulations achieving the outcomes that we hope for – the outcomes that serve and align with our community's vision for itself? Why and for whom are we preserving old buildings and enforcing stylistic unity? Can we continue to promote our unique brand of heritage tourism while acknowledging and celebrating our diverse community identities? Is there room in the preservation of our traditions for architectural innovation, creativity, and continued evolution of the built environment? How do we create neighborhood stability, increase housing affordability, and promote continued year-round residence in our historic districts amidst market forces that seem to undermine these goals? What role can preservation play in creating a more sustainable and livable community? And are we brave enough

to invite more voices to the table and honor Santa Fe's multiple pasts and diverse cultural values in an inclusive way that will take us toward the future that is in the best interest of all our residents? (I believe we are.)

As Max Page and others have suggested, a new generation of preservationists are beginning to shift the narrative away from "inherent historical values of old buildings, and the material integrity of those artifacts" toward acknowledging the socio-political and identity-shaping values of preservation and to recognizing the economic interests at play in historic preservation.

Yes, old buildings hold great power. In crafting a preservation ethos for our future, let us harness that power. Let us build on the foundation of continuity and tradition that we have spent a century securing and add the stones and mortar that connect us to one another, by telling our stories and sharing our experiences, and by imagining a more equitable, livable, and sustainable future.

As David Lowenthal has said, "That heritage is viable only in a living community is a tenant widely accepted but seldom acted on. To sustain a legacy of stones, those who dwell among them also need stewardship."



Brick coping atop the Borrego House, Melanie McWhorter

*Lisa Gavioli Roach is the City of Santa Fe's new Historic Preservation Division Manager. A community planner and historic preservationist by training, Lisa understands that the importance of saving historic buildings lies not just in preserving the physical fabric of place but in creating the opportunity for living people to tell their stories, to connect with their pasts, and to derive meanings that can shape their community's future. Lisa received her Masters Degree in Community and Regional Planning and Graduate Certificate in Historic Preservation and Regionalism from the University of New Mexico in 2009. She came to the world of planning and historic preservation through her studies in ancestral Puebloan archaeology at the University of Arizona, where she received a Master of Arts in Anthropology in 2004. Lisa has worked at all levels of government and in the nonprofit and private sectors, around affordable housing, trails and open space conservation, cultural resource management, economic development and community revitalization, and residential real estate sales. Having witnessed the detrimental effects of urban sprawl and exclusionary zoning on a community's cultural resources, identity, and livability, Lisa is committed to reframing historic preservation as a tool to promote sustainable development and creative placemaking, to facilitate community storytelling and reconciliation, and to enhance social equity.*





Mill at El Rancho de las Golondrinas, Mara Saxer

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## **HSFF MISSION**

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