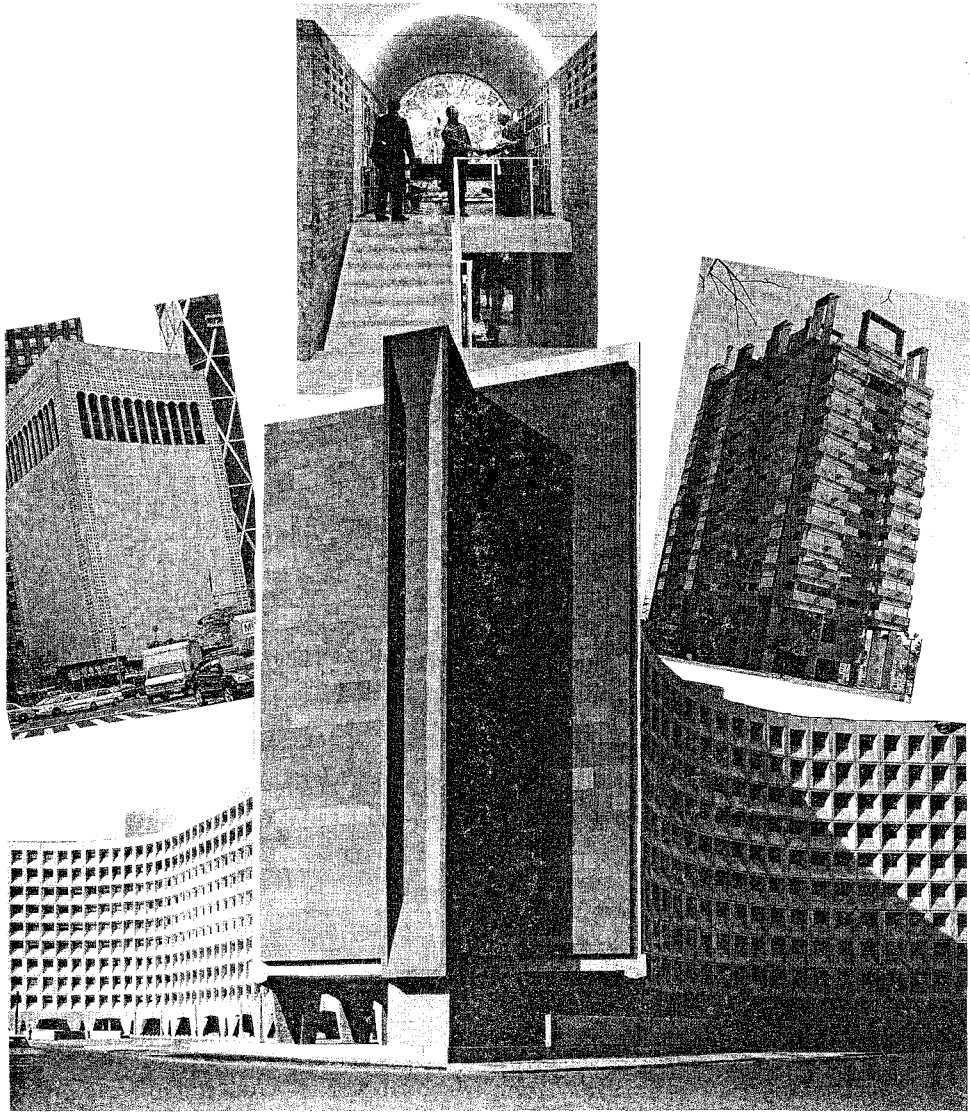


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Preservationists Debate the Recent Past



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Preservation theorist and educator, Professor Emeritus of History Chester H. Liebs was founder of the University of Vermont Historic Preservation Program. A National Trust Advisor Emeritus, and former Fulbright scholar and professor in Japan.

Notes

¹ Chester Liebs, "Remember Our Not-So-Distant Past," *Historic Preservation*, January-March 1978:30-35. The National Trust supported the conservation of the recent past in an editorial in the same issue on page 3.

² From a talk given by architectural historian Catherine Bisher at Mary Washington College in 1986, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act, as corroborated by Ms. Bisher.

³ These surveys were required and funded with matching grants to the states from the then Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service which administered the nation's federal historic preservation program at the time. Support for this highly-necessary and heroic undertaking gradually declined as preservation increasingly became an industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s. See Adele Chatfield-Taylor, "From Ruskin to Rouse," *Historic Preservation: Forging a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Preservation Alumni, 1989): 13.

⁴ The term "the new preservation" for example was frequently used by the staff of the New York State Historic Trust (now Office of Parks, Recreation

Number 2 Columbus Circle, 1964, Edward Durell Stone, New York City is threatened with re-skinning with a new facade. While on the World Monument Fund's "watch list" and the National Trust's America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list, the building has so far been denied New York City landmark status. This is an apt illustration of how agreement within the preservation field about the importance and level of significance of such Modernist structures is still in a state of flux. Photo by Chester H. Liebs.

land—in which suburbs (albeit Greenbelts rather than Levittowns) were seen as the hope of America.¹⁸ In contrast cities, with their noisy downtowns, snarled traffic, teeming tenement districts, and industries belching smoke over grim workers' housing, were seen as the dead hand of the past. With a turn of mind and change in values, much of the latter has been given new life by the preservation movement. It will be interesting to see what the fate of today's recent past will be.