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REGIONAL COMPONENTS OF THE RECOGNITION OF HISTORIC PLACES

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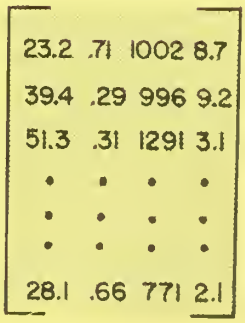

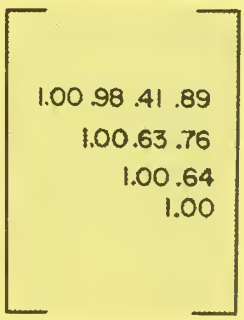

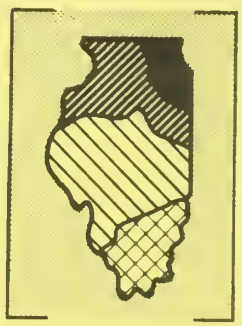

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REGIONAL COMPONENTS OF THE RECOGNITION OF HISTORIC PLACES*

Richard W. Travis

ABSTRACT

The paper outlines the major characteristics and developmental trends in the historic preservation movement in the United States with particular emphasis on the identification of historic places. Using the National Register of Historic Places as a data source for input into a Q-mode factor analysis, regional biases in the identification of historic places are revealed. These biases point up deficiencies in earlier literature concerning the development of the preservation movement and suggest areas of activity in which geographers could make direct contributions to the nationwide effort to conserve the nation's historic resource base.

INTRODUCTION

Although most research in the area of historic preservation has been conducted by architects, planners, historians, and professional preservationists (Menges, 1969; Rath, 1966), geographers have some interest in the preservation of historic places as an aspect of the conservation of the cultural landscape (Travis, 1972; Burgoon, 1971; Jakle and Janiskee, 1971; Mulhauser, 1971; Rowntree, 1971; Fenwick, 1970; Scott, 1970; Johnson, 1969; Newcomb, 1969; Lowenthal, 1968; Newcomb, 1967; Lowenthal, 1966). In an effort to expand the interests of geographers in preservation of the cultural landscape, this study is aimed, first, at reviewing the nature of historic preservation in the United States, and second, at investigating the nature of regional biases in the recognition of what constitutes a historic place.

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NATURE AND FUNCTION OF PRESERVATION

The problem of whether the marking of a place which is deemed historic but no longer contains any visible evidence of its past is preservation has never been adequately explored. In this work, the activity of marking such places will be considered as preservation. Thus, the term "preservation" is used here in its most general sense to include both the preservation and the restoration of features on the landscape. Preservation connotes a maintenance of a feature in its present condition, while restoration is the action of remodeling or reconstructing a feature to resemble what it may have looked like at an earlier period in its history.

Elmer has recognized four distinct phases in American preservation (Elmer, 1971, pp. 2-11). The earliest (Monument Phase) centered around efforts to conserve places associated with famous events and people. The second, or Architectural Phase, of the preservation movement involved the recognition of buildings that were of architectural importance. Beginning with the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg in 1926, preservation became involved with the restoration of entire communities in a semi-historical state. Currently, the American preservation movement has entered a phase of practical preservation which includes some features of all of the earlier phases but at the same time emphasizes the concept of restoring and conserving buildings for contemporary and financially self-supporting uses; however very little effort has been made at preserving the commonplace features and buildings which settlement geographers often use as evidence for the diffusions of folk cultures (Francaviglia, 1970; Glassie, 1968; Jordan, 1966; Kniffen and Glassie, 1966; Stone, 1966; Kniffen, 1965; Stone, 1965).

Efforts by individuals and by local organizations at preserving historic features are so numerous that they are difficult to trace whereas the role of governments, especially the federal and state governments, is much clearer (for information on state efforts see: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1972). The War Department inadvertantly involved the federal government in the preservation movement in 1862 when

the National Battlegrounds and Cemeteries Act authorized governmental purchase of sites associated with the Civil War (Jacobs, 1966). Since that time the part played by the national government has been greatly expanded via the acquisition of historic properties and the passage of numerous pieces of preservation legislation (for a complete treatment of preservation legislation see: Morrison, 1965).

Although preservation legislation is often justified on the basis of the economic value of historic places, historic preservation may be viewed as having four functions: esthetic, economic, social, and educational. While the esthetic function is most difficult to evaluate because it represents the result of individual tastes and may indicate psychological frames of reference (Elmer and Sutherland, 1971), the economic function is easier to define. Historic places can be a direct asset to a community that is attempting to expand its tourist industry (Frisbee, 1970; Millard, 1969; Fieguth, 1967). In addition, preservation and restoration of areas which contain substandard housing of historic significance can have a very positive effect on property values (Burgoon, 1971; Wright, 1964). Social aspects associated with the prestige attached to ownership or residence in such preservation areas as Georgetown (D.C.), Brooklyn Heights (New York), or Beacon Hill (Boston) is another motivating force in historic preservation. The educational function of preservation is related to the need for survival of objects which will allow future generations to see continuity in the development of the human landscape (Johnson, 1969). An additional function, which might be termed psychological, has recently been suggested by Toffler (1971, pp. 390-392) in his popular book Future Shock. He promotes the use of preservation communities as a haven for those persons in our society who cannot cope with accelerating technological change.

INVENTORIES OF HISTORIC PLACES

One of the first, and most difficult, phases of a planned historic preservation program is deciding what is to be preserved. The financial resources are usually not available to preserve all the structures in all

areas which might merit attention; thus responsible individuals must develop priorities. The preservationist begins by developing lists of places deserving attention; establishes criteria for determining relative importance and conducts exhaustive field surveys (Ziegler, 1971, pp. 8-9; Providence City Plan Commission, 1967).

The federal government began listing places of historical importance in 1935 with the establishment of the Historic American Buildings Survey, a "make-work" depression project which was aimed at compiling a drawn and photographed record of the nation's most important buildings. Following the passage of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, this listing was expanded into the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings (McKee, 1970; U.S. Department of the Interior, 1970).

The most comprehensive preservation legislation by the national government is the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (PL 89-665). It provides for an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation replete with matching grants to states and calls for the establishment of a National Register of Historic Places. Inclusion on the Register affords a historic place the opportunity for thorough hearings before it may be disturbed by any agency of the federal government or by any project which is fully or partially funded by it (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 1971). At its inception, the Register included only properties of national significance that were units of the National Park Service or qualified for status as National Historic Landmarks under the 1935 act. By 1969, the Register had been expanded to 1100 entries of national, state, and local significance (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1969).

Considering the varied experience and cultural diversity of the American past, one might expect a great deal of diversity in what is considered to be historic. The following questions might be raised: (1) Are there regional variations in what is deemed historic?, (2) If variations do exist, do the variations reflect particular time periods or historic themes?

In Presence of the Past, Hosmer (1965) describes four regional trends in American preservation. Preservation in New England is described as a private effort centered on saving buildings which were

basically of local importance. In the Middle Atlantic states, preservation centers on artifacts of the Revolution and early figures in the Republic with the bulk of the activity carried on by state governments. Southern preservation, stimulated by the federal and state governments, concentrates on the birthplaces and homesteads of historic personages. In the Far West, efforts toward preservation, again assumed by state and local governments, cover a wide variety of historical themes. Although Hosmer's book is a milestone effort, the view he presents is somewhat distorted by the fact that he considers only houses and buildings and neglects the Midwestern and Western states. In order to obtain a more accurate idea of variations in American perceptions of what should be considered historic, the following analysis was undertaken.

ANALYTICAL OBJECTIVES

In order to better understand the nature of the characteristics of historic properties and more importantly, what we perceive as being historic, descriptive information about the entries in the National Register was subjected to principal components analysis (for discussion see: Rummel, 1970, pp. 112-113; Harman, 1960). This method was designed to find the underlying characteristics of historic places on a regional basis. Qualitative descriptive data concerning the character of each listing in the National Register were enumerated by state and then transformed to percentage data to show the percent of a state's listings which had a particular characteristic. Although biases are associated with the use of a closed number system (King, 1969, pp. 166-183) the results are believed to outweigh potential dangers. The data were arrayed in a twenty-five by forty-nine matrix in preparation for a Q-mode analysis (Rummel, 1970; King, 1969). The characteristics used as observations are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1 -- HISTORIC PRESERVATION CHARACTERISTICS

Type	Function
Building	Military
Structure-Object	Manufacturing-Commerce-Transport
Site	Institutional
District	Residential
Ruins-Archeological	Indian Settlement
Natural Area	Multiple Uses
	Other Uses
Time Period	
Pre-Columbian - 16th	Location
17th Century	Urban
18th Century	
19th Century	
20th Century	Ownership
	Federal
Administrative	State-Local
	Multiple Private-public
Accessible to Public	Private
NPS Administered	

Using a BIOMED program, (Dixon, 1968) on an I.B.M. 360 computer, a principal components solution was calculated and rotated to a Varimax position. The factor loadings were mapped and interpreted as preservation type regions with the character of each region denoted through examination of the factor scores. The factor loadings and factor score matrices are reproduced in Tables 2 and 3. The determination of the number of factors was accomplished by running a preliminary factor analysis and then plotting a scree diagram of the percent of variance explained. The most appropriate eigenvalue cut-off was shown to be 1.5. Regions resulting from the final analysis are displayed in Fig. 1. The map portrays both cores of regions and transitional areas. Where the loadings were very close to being equal (.05 or less difference) on more than one factor, the states were categorized as transitional areas. It is assumed that increased numbers of observations (Register listings) in each transitional state would result in distinct loadings on a single factor.

TABLE 2 -- ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS MATRIX

	Communalities	I	II	III	IV
Alabama	.852		.74395		
Arizona	.902		.51326		.77448
Arkansas	.887		.83467		
California	.850	.65810		.59872	
Colorado	.396			.47562	
Connecticut	.974	.95702			
Delaware	.812	.81056			
D.C.	.758	.69535			
Florida	.816		.75857		
Georgia	.934		.80167		
Idaho	.838	.58677	.67929		
Illinois	.869	.76677			
Indiana	.929	.77582			
Iowa	.840				.63919
Kansas	.912			.63623	
Kentucky	.903	.79676			
Louisiana	.827	.61109	.63352		
Maine	.967	.96591			
Maryland	.890	.81388			
Massachusetts	.946	.95321			
Michigan	.775	.81560			
Minnesota	.833	.58534		.55804	
Mississippi	.851		.61688	.52757	
Missouri	.967	.65157		.56957	
Montana	.832			.75506	
Nebraska	.860			.67888	
Nevada	.772	.59545		.58452	
New Hampshire	.870	.92219			
New Jersey	.909	.83837			
New Mexico	.853				.76766
New York	.987	.94000			
N. Carolina	.872	.56417	.70926		
N. Dakota	.301			.40137	
Ohio	.931	.72953		.55878	
Oklahoma	.688			.52253	
Oregon	.805	.54269		.55852	
Pennsylvania	.943	.92263			
Rhode Island	.637	.70539			
S. Carolina	.863	.89555			
S. Dakota	.881				.89271
Tennessee	.925	.63067	.66574		
Texas	.824	.58566			
Utah	.832			.75700	
Vermont	.869	.79162			
Virginia	.968	.88477			
Washington	.812		.77739		
W. Virginia	.658	.56376			.51303
Wisconsin	.946	.75106		.51468	
Wyoming	.847		.53761	.68313	
% Explained	84.12	62.53	12.62	4.95	4.01

TABLE 3 -- ROTATED FACTOR SCORE MATRIX[a]

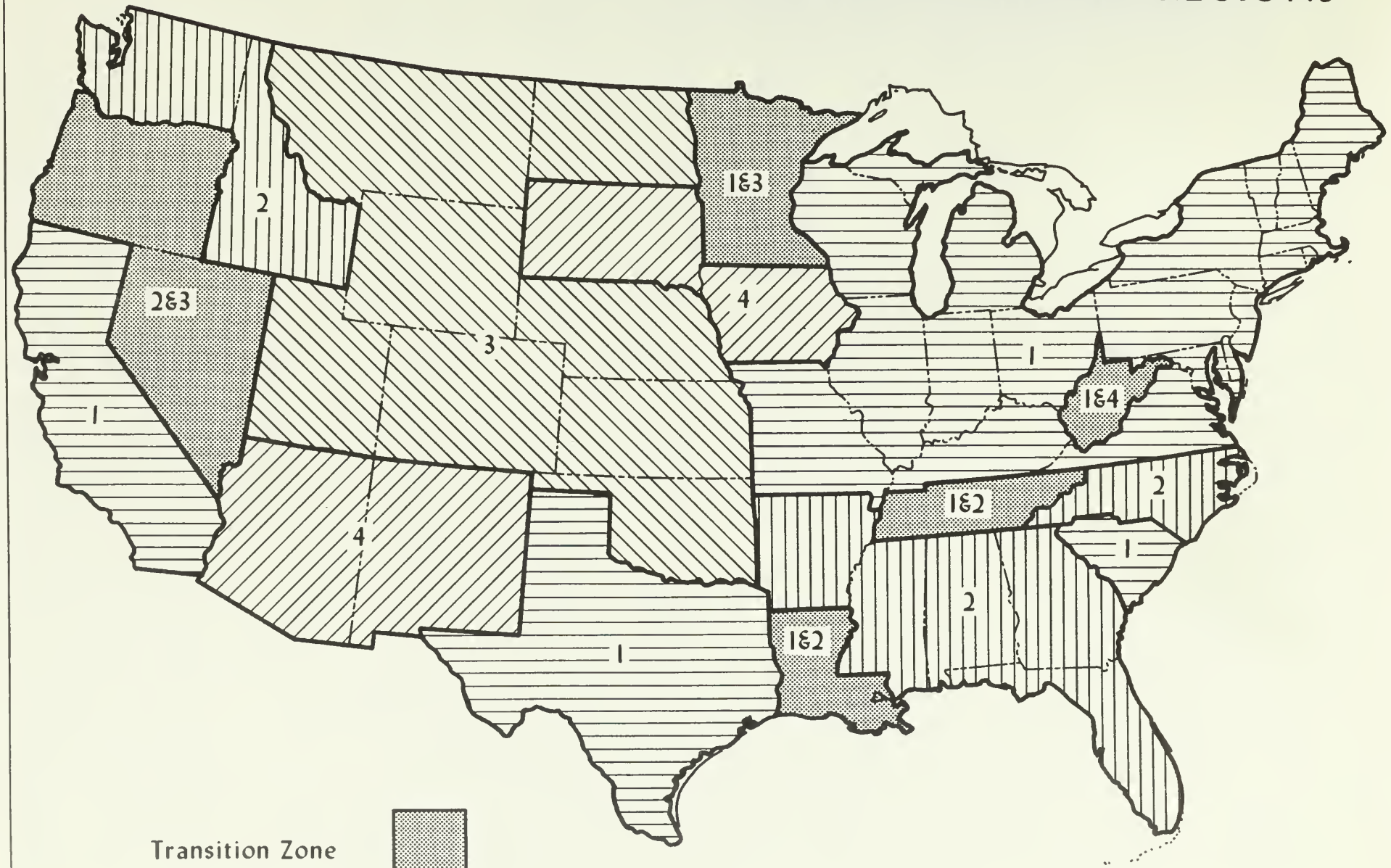
	I	II	III	IV
Building	2.3439			
Struc.-Objt.				
Site		1.0022		
District				
Ruins-Archeol.				2.3957
Natural Area				
Pre-Colum.-16th				2.0959
17th Century				
18th Century				
19th Century			3.7591	
20th Century				
Access. to Public	1.4570	3.0900		
N.P.S.				
Military		1.7425		
Mfg.-Comm.-Transp.			1.1073	
Institutional				
Residential	1.2382			
Indian Settlement				2.2275
Multiple Uses				
Other Uses				
Urban	2.3816			
Federal		1.5797		
State-Local				
Multiple Priv-Pub.				
Private	1.3091			

[a] Factor scores are normalized and only scores of 1.0 or larger are shown in the matrix.

RESULTS

Factor I, which explains 62.5 percent of the total variance, includes a nearly contiguous block of states in the northeast quarter of the United States with outliers in South Carolina, California, and Texas. This historic preservation area is representative of urban locations, buildings, public accessibility, private ownership, and residential function. The inclusion of South Carolina in this category may be explained by the preponderance of sites in Charleston included in that state's

PRESERVATION TYPE REGIONS



listings. The links with Texas and California are based on relatively low loadings. In the case of Texas, the tie seems to be due to a high number of sites that are privately owned, while California's linkage to the grouping is somewhat unclear.

Factor II, which is split between a southeastern and a northwestern block of states, is characterized by federally owned sites which had military functions and which are accessible to the public. In the southeast this is due to the large number of historic places associated with the Civil War. In the northwest, Idaho is brought into the group by sites related to the Lewis and Clark expedition. Washington is included due to a high proportion of forts which have been recognized as an important part of the early settlement of the region.

Nineteenth century manufacturing-commerce-transportation functions characterize Factor III, a contiguous block of states roughly coincident with the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. This historic type area is undoubtedly related to places and events associated with westward expansion.

Factor IV, which consists of Indian ruins and archeological sites of pre-Columbian through the 16th century plus Indian settlements, is located in the states of South Dakota, Iowa, Arizona, and New Mexico. In the southwest, the major influence is the many pueblos which have been cited as historic places, while in South Dakota and Iowa, Indian mounds appear to predominate.

Several states do not fit into the categorization scheme very well. In the cases of North Dakota, Nevada, and West Virginia, the apparent incongruities may be related to the small number of listings associated with these states. Although Colorado is associated with Factor III, the communality (and thus the percentage of explanation) is quite low. A probable explanation for Colorado's low associative value with Factor III lies in the fact that a large proportion of the state's listings were categorized as districts. It is assumed that the calculation of a larger number of factors would have revealed Colorado to be an additional region characterized by the district type of preservation.

An overall spatial contiguity and similarity in loadings is found within each of the four factor types. This would seem to indicate that

regional groupings of the underlying characteristics of historic places listed in the National Register do exist.

The results of the analysis also shed further light on the nature of preservation since 1926, the date at which Hosmer (1965) closed his narrative. It appears that his analysis of historic house preservation was a useful tool for describing the progress of preservation in the northeastern quadrant of the country where houses are an important factor, but from 1926 to 1969, historic house preservation is not a good surrogate of the total preservation effort at a national level. The view of New England as the focus of private sector activity is quite well supported, but questions may be raised about the characterization of preservation in other sections of the country. It does not appear that the nature of what is being preserved, and the role of governments is much different in the Middle Atlantic states than it is in New England. Although Hosmer emphasizes the early preference for Revolutionary period houses and sites in the early stages of the movement, time periods appear to be important only in the trans-Mississippi West. It would also appear that the same underlying characteristics which are found in the East are also found in the Midwest but to a lesser degree.

The view of preservation in the South as being the preservation of homes of the South's great men ignores the overpowering influence of the federal government in that area. The large number of military surplus properties located there has great explanatory power in describing preservation in the South. Early Federal efforts to preserve Indian ruins and archeological sites in the Southwest appears to have given direction to work there.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The character of the regions described in this study will not remain static. Early entry of the properties which had been named historic landmarks under the Historic Sites Act of 1935 still weigh heavily on the character of the Register. As the impact of completed state inventories stimulated by the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 are felt,

the character of the Register will be dramatically changed. Other changes will be brought about by a recent reordering of the preservation grant program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development which will require properties to be listed in the National Register before they may become eligible for federal assistance (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1972).

Although the National Register listings are an important factor leading to preservation of a large number of important features in our cultural landscape, this listing represents the perception of historic places only at the national level. The filtering effect of complex bureaucratic procedures and stringent criteria concerning what constitutes a historic place may cause the Register to be unrepresentative of the types of places which thousands of individuals across the country perceive as being historic.

Geographers could and should input into the preservation effort on at least three fronts. First, basic research is needed to discover the meaning of our society's concept of historic place as well as the concept of historic place at an individual level. Second, historical and settlement geographers could make a meaningful contribution to the selection of places to be listed by identifying landscape features which best represent various phases in the regional development of the nation. Third, and perhaps most importantly geographers have used and should actively use their talents for identifying the processes of spatial change which are destroying much of the nation's historic inheritance. The redirection of preservation efforts must be aimed at putting the preservation movement in harmony with the constantly changing nature of space if historic preservation is to persist as anything more than a temporary holding action against the future.

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