It is the lot of an Under Secretary to fill in on short notice for his superior. So do other officers, including the National Park Service Director. My role is even more remote, for tonight I'm the substitute's substitute.

Both the Secretary and the Director send their regrets. Both are well known to you, and I know you feel without their being here that you can count on them.

Insofar as I have a subject, it is to talk about historic preservation. Last Wednesday I talked about fish to a fisheries convention; next Monday I'll talk about mining to a mining convention; and so on--always facing an audience of experts, knowing more about the subject than I do.

In fact, I speak to you tonight with only one piece of knowledge firmly fixed in my mind--that Americans have no desire to preserve any building 75 years old. Charley Peterson stated this rule to me, and I refer any questions you may have as to its application to buildings in your region to Mr. Peterson.

I leave behind me any feeling of assurance when I tell you that I've evolved a private classification system for objects of historic preservation.

One class of structure achieves its immortality not from what it is, but from whose it was. "George Washington slept here" is the easiest of all standards to apply to justify staying the wrecker's ball. Of course, one man's Stonewall Jackson may be another man's William T. Sherman.

In Council Bluffs, Iowa, a few years ago, I helped to preserve the fine old house of Railroad Builder and Republican politician General Dodge by presenting one of the Registered National Historic Site markers. Some of the local people confided, however, their interest in another project, which typifies my second classification. Council Bluffs has a Lazy Susan Jail, one in which the circular cell block with pie wedge cells rotates to and from the single door. This hundred-year old oddity was just that, an oddity. And Americans adore preserving oddities.

The third, and to some the most important class, is the structure of architectural excellence. At last, we are on the high road--or we would be if
we could get any kind of agreement, at any given time, as to what is excellent. Does the Leaning Tower of Pisa fit here? Or the State-War-Navy Building in Washington?

I mention my private system of classification because I am a bureaucrat, a government administrator. Preservation of historical buildings is a proper and worthy government objective, which President Johnson specified in his Natural Beauty Message of last February 8. It is a program objective of the National Park Service. And the subject challenges the ingenuity of zoning ordinance draftsmen in the cities, and of lawyers and judges in condemnation or injunction lawsuits.

In other words, when an activity becomes governmental, not strictly private, then there must be rules and standards and procedures and the paraphernalia of administration.

Whether it is for rerouting a highway, or for a possible recommendation of National Park or historic site status, or for determining the qualification of participation in a yet-to-be authorized grant program, some government official is going to be reviewing subjective judgments on what should be preserved. It is for the public's protection as well as to government officials that there are rules for him, and that they be known.

I do not pretend to know the answers to any given preservation question. Being for preservation in general is easy; being for preservation of a given structure involves two kinds of judgments. One is subjective and aesthetic; the other is neither. There will be many differing opinions about whether a structure is authentic, or unique, or graceful or functional or representative of an era or class.

But these disagreements, although often heated, are not the ones which cause the troubles. The question becomes much tougher when framed with an alternative--an urban renewal project, a freeway, an apartment or a school.

People administering public programs, as well as those with budgeting controls in the private sector, must think of the long term operating, as well as the acquisition, cost. If your budget won't maintain a structure, dare you accept it even as a gift, no matter how much you want it to be preserved.

With a limited number of dollars for acquisition, preservation becomes a question of alternatives.

Yet the objective is worth the effort.

Plato observed that what is honored in a country will be cultivated there. There is a new national awareness of the value of historic preservation across this land.

Plans to place these values into decision-making operations in many parts of our national life are now being developed and executed. Particularly to be commended are the industrial and business leaders.
President Johnson has given fresh new direction to this movement in describing his new conservation as one of innovation and restoration, to include the preservation of our most valued historic sites and buildings. The President has just designated historic Pennsylvania Avenue and environs as a National Historic Site.

When Eric Severaid reviewed Secretary Udall's book, The Quiet Crisis, together with another new book on the same theme--God's Own Junkyard by Peter Blake, he commented:

With breathtaking rapidity we are destroying all that was lovely to look at and turning America into a prison house of the spirit . . . . The affluent society with relentless single-minded energy is turning our cities, most of suburbia and most of our roadways into the most affluent slum on earth.

Preservation and progress are not inimical. The important thing, as I said earlier, is to see that the question of preservation is presented at the right time in the decisional process. Many times, it will be found that with the attention of the right people at the right time, structures of history and architecture can add to the flavor of planned progress. The atmospheres of another day are always appealing.

Today the richness and diversity of our historical and architectural heritage is more fully appreciated than it was a few years ago. The restoration and furnishing of English Colonial buildings, principally houses, is no longer its principal concern. All phases of man's experience on this continent are well represented among the 143 historical properties in your National Park System. These include such diverse holdings as the great Spanish fortification of El Morro in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Cumberland Gap, Kentucky; the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal; Old Fort Laramie, Wyoming; and Booker T. Washington's Birthplace.

I've spoken before about how important it is for us to have more and better surveys of our historical resources. To identify and classify our historical resources is a task for trained historians. In the Nation's Capital, historians and architects should complete definitive surveys of all structures with comprehensive historical data. Detailed and documented information is of positive value, even if the decision is not to preserve. This brings to mind the fine work of the Historic American Buildings Survey. We should have official lists—not private lists—of all structures in a city. The National Park Service is currently conducting a National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings to determine which ones "possess exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States."

The impact of the Landmarks program on the historic preservation movement was recognized during the 1965 fiscal year when President Johnson in his message to the Congress on Natural Beauty declared: "The Registry of National Historic
Conservation Fund bill. Although aimed primarily at meeting the Nation's recreational needs in future decades, this legislation encompasses historic sites and buildings under the heading of recreation and makes them eligible for matching Federal grants for acquisition and development by the States and their subdivisions. The only requirement is that such properties be included as part of the comprehensive statewide recreation plan that each State is now preparing for review and approval by the Secretary of the Interior.

But in our pride and zeal to preserve our monuments, we must, said Secretary Stewart L. Udall, "be always mindful of the natural environment in which they are placed. Polluted waterways, devastated forests, destruction of the wildlife and natural beauty which once abounded in this great Nation have brought us to a very real, if quiet, crisis."

On October 26, 1963, scarcely a month before his death, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy made an eloquent address at Amherst College, in which he expressed some of his aspirations for our country:

I look forward to a great future for America, a future in which our country will match its military strength with our moral strength, its wealth with our wisdom, its power with our purpose. I look forward to an America which will not be afraid of grace and beauty, which will protect the beauty of our natural environment, which will preserve the great old American houses and squares and parks of our national past, and which will build handsome and balanced cities for our future... And I look forward to an America which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength, but for its civilization as well.

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