

Organizational History

The Beginnings

1975. The eve of the nation's bicentennial celebration. The American historic preservation movement was spreading west. A group of Washingtonians, aware of the importance of saving historic places and spaces throughout the state, met in Port Townsend at Fort Worden to discuss how to cooperate in that effort. One outcome of their focus on localizing the national bicentennial observance and continuing its impact beyond 1976 was the creation of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. The mission of the founders was not much different from that of the organization today, which reads in part: "The Trust helps make local preservation work by building a statewide ethic that preserves Washington's historic places through advocacy, education, collaboration, and stewardship."

These founding volunteers incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, recruited likeminded preservationists, held board meetings, established a membership program, began presenting conferences and workshops, testified in legislative hearings, published a newsletter, held fundraisers, and offered technical assistance, via typed and mailed communications, slideshows, carpooling around the state, and telephone calls (and long-distance calls cost money in those days).

The Washington Trust's early board members ranged from owners of historic buildings who cared deeply for their downtowns, to people who never saw an old building or ancient artifact they didn't like; to architects establishing the early stages of professional rehabilitation practices and adaptive reuse; to historians, artists, academics, and museum staff; and to the city and county preservation planners who were a symbol of the growing professionalization of the preservation movement.

For the next few decades, the organization was largely volunteer-driven and operated out of borrowed office space (though a paid administrative coordinator was hired in the late 1970s and a grant-funded intern came on board in 1980). However, the need for professional staff for greater effectiveness and impact was recognized and resulted in a successful application in the early 1980s for National Trust for Historic Preservation matching funding to pay the first executive director. Staffing varied over the years, but the dedicated, active, and knowledgeable board of directors kept the vision going.

From 2001 to Today

The Trust's capacity soared in 2001, when noted Seattle philanthropist and community leader Patsy Bullitt Collins gifted her grandparents' home, the Stimson-Green Mansion, to our organization. This change-making gift enabled the Trust to increase the number of professional staff, have a stable office location, and operate one of Seattle's great architectural landmarks as an educational space and special events venue.

The lasting efforts of the founders and subsequent staff and board members have coalesced into several signature activities and programs.

Public Policy & Legislative Activities

Since our founding, the Trust has sponsored major policy and legislative initiatives, including spearheading the establishment of Washington State's ***Special Tax Valuation Program***, one of the few fiscal incentives available for historic preservation that encourages and promotes reinvestment in our state's historic building stock. Every year, our staff, board members, and community allies travel to Washington, DC, to meet with legislators and advocate for preservation funding and program support at the federal level in ***National Preservation Advocacy Week*** (a.k.a. Lobby Day). For the past 10 years, our Lobby Day efforts included support for creating the ***Maritime Washington National Heritage Area*** along the state's saltwater coastline, and at long last, in early 2019, we secured the sought-after National Heritage Area designation, with the Washington Trust named as the local management entity.

Advocacy & Education

One of our core advocacy programs is our management of ***Washington's Most Endangered Places list***, with which we focus public attention and technical resources on significant properties around the state that are at risk of demolition or neglect. Our ***Valerie Sivinski Fund*** provides annual grants to grassroots organizations around the state working to preserve the important places in their communities. Our central educational program is the annual ***Youth Heritage Project***, a four-day interactive field school that engages high-school students in activities designed to foster an understanding and appreciation of historic, cultural, and natural resources. We also promote heritage tourism through our ***Revisiting Washington*** online interactive travel guide and publish a quarterly magazine, ***This Place***, which keeps members and other subscribers up to date on what is happening in preservation and community revitalization around the state.

Main Street

In 2009 and 2010, the Washington Trust joined Main Street managers, small business owners, and downtown revitalization enthusiasts from across the state to advocate for saving the ***Washington State Main Street Program***, which provides critical support to local communities working to revitalize their historic downtowns and in turn creates local jobs. In conjunction with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), we now manage the Washington State Main Street Program, comprised of 36 Communities and 33 Affiliates. In 2017, we successfully spearheaded efforts to enhance the Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program, ensuring that more communities with historic downtowns across the state will have access to the program. In 2021, the state legislature raised the cap on the Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program and increased funding for the Washington State Main Street Program overall, enabling us to hire additional staff. We also organize the annual ***RevitalizeWA conference***, Washington's preservation and economic development conference.

Stewardship

Since coming into ownership of the Stimson-Green Mansion in 2001, we have worked to maintain this historic National Register and City of Seattle Landmark property at the highest standards of historic

preservation practices. It now stands as one of Seattle's last remaining grand mansions—the only residential landmark with intact interiors that is open to the public. We educate the public about the Mansion's history through monthly public tours and through private tours for students, seniors, and other specialty interest groups. We host numerous public events such as educational workshops, lectures, and concerts. The Mansion provides office space for the Washington Trust and other tenants. We make the Mansion's public rooms available for nonprofit organizations and community groups seeking meeting/retreat spaces and offer the Mansion as a public events venue for holiday parties, weddings, and beyond. In 2021, we completed a multi-year capital campaign which facilitated important repairs to the Mansion's domestic water system, interior carpets and wall coverings, leaded-glass and stained-glass windows, and exterior masonry.

State grant programs

In recent years we have forged a close working relationship with DAHP, having played instrumental roles in establishing three highly successful state-funded historic preservation grant programs, which we now administer. The ***Heritage Barn Program***, created in 2007, has resulted in more than \$3.5 million in grant funds being awarded to 160 barn owners across the state. The ***Historic County Courthouse Rehabilitation Grant Program***, created in 2005, has awarded more than \$21 million in grant funds to 26 counties, which in turn has leveraged more than \$48 million in capital investments. The ***Historic Cemetery Preservation Grant Program***, created in 2017, has awarded more than \$1.2 million in grant funds to 36 historic cemeteries across the state. Most recently, in 2021, the state legislature created the new ***Historic Theater Grant Program*** to acknowledge the important economic and community role theaters play in downtowns; the first round of grants will be administered by the Washington Trust and awarded in 2022.

Today, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation comprises 10 staff members and 25 board members from around the state working to save historic and heritage sites across Washington. As an organization, we seek to serve diverse audiences through the above programs and to include more people than ever in the important work of historic preservation, in order to save the places that matter in Washington State.