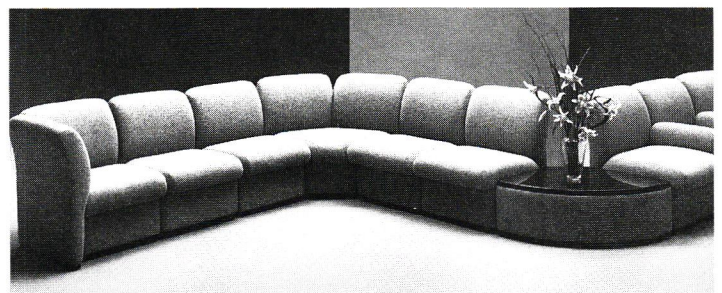


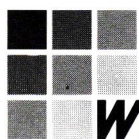
# COLUMNS





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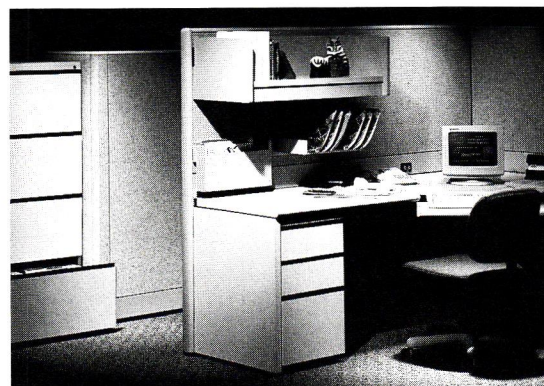
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COLUMNS is published ten times a year by the Pittsburgh Chapter AIA in association with the Cantor Group. Telephone: 412/661-3734; FAX: 412/661-6287.

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## View Point: Preservation: What's it Worth?

Douglas C. Berryman, AIA, President


I subscribe to a bimonthly magazine called *Old House Journal*, a wonderful publication containing restoration techniques, hints and a "where to find it" section for aficionados and owners of older homes. The people who most want information of this sort are adopting a somewhat purist attitude towards reclaiming and refurbishing older structures. There are seemingly limitless ends to which some people will go to restore a home to an admirable level of authenticity.

A section in each issue dubbed "Remuddling of the Month," is devoted to less fortunate attempts at restoration. Inclusion in this small corner of the magazine is a dubious distinction for the building and its owner. Examples are often humorous, and sometimes ludicrous (horizontal black and white siding to emulate a log cabin, unfortunately placed on a Queen Anne bungalow?), and leave me with a conviction that restoration and preservation can not only be done better, but at a cost at least commensurate with the monies spent on abysmal failures.

There is a fine old Victorian residence in the Shadyside area that is sadly languishing as it awaits either a wrecking crew or competent restoration. The building's fate has been the subject of much deliberation, and the final decision hinges upon the owner reaching agreement with the Historic Review Commission. Projected estimates for renovation hover around \$560,000; the owner's quandary is whether to spend that princely sum on restoration, or at least that amount on demolishing the existing structure and building a new one. The real bottom line, should demolition be permitted, will be determined by the relative marketability of the two choices.

Is there a limit on how much money we should expect someone to spend on saving a building? Clearly there are examples of architecture, both public and private, that are of such significance in their design and their place in our heritage that their permanence should be secured at all costs. The expense for doing this can and should be borne by some consortium of public and private interests. The decision to preserve buildings of lesser import must lie with the cost-effectiveness of the process, and, hopefully, with the guidance of responsible architects furnished to receptive owners.

Not every building is "significant," and I tend to think that some of the old is being saved because the public isn't sure that the new will be better. The reasons for such uncertainty are consistently paraded before us—and we, as architects, have not only a challenge, but a duty to ensure a continuum of good design, so that this argument can be laid to rest.

We also have a responsibility to ensure that the best examples of our heritage remain, so that the models of excellence are constantly in view. 

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### On the Cover

*A lounging lion guards the entrance to Dollar Bank's historic Fourth Avenue office, restored by IAS Corp. and winner of an award from the Historic Review Commission. Photo by Jim Schafer.*

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