

Letters

Readers may submit letters to the editor (see contact information on the page facing the table of contents). Letters should include the writer's name, address, and daytime telephone number for confirmation. Letters may be edited for publication and not all letters will be published. If a letter pertains to an article or review, the editor may forward the letter to the author for reply.

What is "Authenticity?"

In his essay, "Images of the Past: Historical Authenticity and Inauthenticity from Disney to Times Square," in the Summer 2004 issue of *CRM Journal*, Michael Kelleher takes the view that authenticity is a virtue to be found only in the original structure or site or artifact, and that subsequent alteration, emulation, merchandising, pastiche, or Disneyfication renders things inauthentic and hence wrong. No wonder he ends on such a pessimistic note! But most who work in heritage conservation today are increasingly appreciative of palimpsests, sites, and structures that exhibit the marks of their subsequent histories as well as their initial construction, along with both contrived and unconscious imitations and emulations. We always aim to theme our pasts.

Kelleher erroneously cites me in three places: On page 9, he attributes to me the quote "Disney always does things first-class, and if they set out to do American history, they'll hire the best historians money can buy...to create a completely plausible, completely believable appearance of American history." It is not in fact I who said this, but a panelist

quoted by me from a statement by Colonial Williamsburg's Cary Carson.

On page 10, he writes "David Lowenthal complains that although '[s]igns and guidebooks usually specify' what is a reconstruction and what is not, 'visitors soon forget, if they ever note, differences between authentic and imitated, untouched and restored, specific and generic.'" I did not complain, but just commented. Kelleher makes it appear that I share his disapproval, which I do not.

On page 18, note 28, the quote referred to is not from *The Past is a Foreign Country*, but from *Possessed by the Past*. It refers to the Cary Carson panel discussion noted above.

David Lowenthal
London, England

Response: David Lowenthal inaccurately attributes to me the view that only "original" sites or structures are authentic and that I deny the value of "subsequent alteration." I say no such thing in my essay and do not address the issue of alterations to historic sites or structures. On page 17, I explain that for purposes of the essay, authentic refers to "actual historic structures and artifacts" and inauthentic refers to "new structures made to appear old." As one who has worked on historic restoration and rehabilitation projects, I have addressed what Mr. Lowenthal calls "subsequent histories" of sites and structures and grappled with the oftentimes difficult determination of just how much subsequent alteration to preserve or remove. As for Mr. Lowenthal's contention that there is virtue in the contrived and Disneyque, I do not deny that

these have their own merit, but will leave it to the essay to explain my view on how they relate to heritage conservation. Lastly, Mr. Lowenthal points out errors in citations. I stand corrected.

Michael Kelleher

Presenting Race and Slavery at Historic Sites

It was with great interest that I read the article, “Presenting Race and Slavery at Historic Sites,” in the Summer 2004 issue of *CRM Journal*. I work at Sully Historic Site in Chantilly, Virginia, with the property’s African American programs. Sully was built in 1794 and was the home of Richard Bland Lee, Northern Virginia’s first Congressman and an uncle of Robert E. Lee. When Richard inherited the land now known as Sully, the property included 29 slaves. At times, there were as many as 40 slaves living and working at Sully.

Like national parks, many other historic places tell the story of slavery. We look forward to the results of the research project so that it will help with our continuing knowledge, understanding, and interpretation to the public.

Tammy Loxton
Historian, Sully Historic Site
Chantilly, Virginia

The Farm Tractor in History

On page 76 of the Summer 2004 issue of *CRM Journal*, a picture of two Filipino farmers in California’s Central Valley is dated “ca. 1930s.” A minor point, but this image is accurately dateable to the 1940s, based on the central piece of equipment, a Ford N model tractor.

Henry Ford relaunched his tractor-manufacturing

interests with the production of the Ford 9N in 1939. This highly successful tractor represented one of the most significant technological achievements in agricultural tractor design, combining the mass production genius and economies of scale that were the hallmarks of Fordism, with the patented invention of the three-point implement hook-up and draft control developed by Harry Ferguson. Subject to some of the same stylistic and cultural influences as that of automobile design, the 9N bore streamlined stamped sheet metal with long horizontal lines and—for a tractor—a ground-hugging mass. It is clear Art Moderne styling.

From 1939 through the middle of 1940, with the stamping process not yet ready for the tractor grille, Ford produced cast aluminium grilles with *horizontal* slats. Those grilles became notorious for being easily broken in use but were not redesigned in steel until a shop engineer crushed one under light pressure from his foot on the shop floor, expressly for the benefit of a supervisor. In mid-model year 1940, model 9Ns rolled out of the assembly with steel grilles having *vertical* spokes. Many farmers who already had dependable early 9Ns subsequently replaced their broken original grilles by ordering new steel ones in order to protect their radiators from the impact of such hazards as bent corn stalks. Minor model changes and operation under a wartime economy led to replacement of the 9N in 1942 with the 2N.

The tractor in the photograph, at least, dates to no earlier than late 1940s. Its like-new condition places it in the early part of that decade.

The farm tractor is often presented as a ubiquitous and neglected part of the changing American landscape. Its design and appearance was, however, as culturally and temporally sensitive as that of cars and diners, which receive a lot more attention.

Bruce Bomberger
Curator, Landis Valley Museum
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Using CRM Journal in the Classroom

Congratulations on the new format and content of *CRM Journal*. I teach a graduate seminar in historic preservation and put the first two issues of the new *CRM Journal* to use right away. I appreciate the care and thought that went into its layout and organization. Students' first impressions about a field can be influenced by its journals because they will compare it with those in other fields.

The class used *CRM Journal* in two ways. First, I included two articles in larger reading assignments so they would be read in the context of related articles: Arleen Pabon's "*Por la encendida calle antillana: Africanisms and Puerto Rican Architecture*," and Michael Kelleher's "Images of the Past: Historic Authenticity and Inauthenticity from Disney to Times Square." Second, I asked students to review each volume and comment on what they thought the strengths and weaknesses were as well as their favorite ("best") article.

There were no negative comments. Although I did not ask them to comment on format, students volunteered how much they liked the cover photographs and the cover format. Some were disappointed that there was no article about the subject of the cover, especially the one with the two

women, although the cover photograph did relate to the history of the Historic American Buildings Survey that was included in the issue.

The students were impressed with the range of subject matter, including some subjects they had not previously considered as preservation. Several were fascinated by the article on shipwrecks in Truk Lagoon. Other favorites included the Historic American Buildings Survey article and the spotlight interview with Russell V. Keune because they offered important additions to the historical narrative of the preservation field. Several commented that, as beginning preservationists, they appreciated Keune's professional story of how he became a preservationist. In addition, *CRM Journal* hit the mark with the website reviews; students use websites all the time. *CRM Journal* helps me discuss the broad range of this field with students.

Again congratulations on the new format and contents of the *CRM Journal*; it makes a strong contribution to historic preservation and provides an excellent outlet for work in the field.

David L. Ames
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 University of Delaware