

an "authentic reproduction" and an "original" suggests something radically wrong with our values.

Therefore the quality of the original East Front was lost when the original was lost. No matter how faithfully the reproduction is carried out, the result is just a copy. Academic accuracy gives the reproduction the air of pretentious masquerade. At best, what is preserved is a correct record of scholarly interest; lost are the intrinsic esthetic values of the work of art itself.

Capitol Remodeling

A strange state of mind exists among many well-intentioned persons charged with the responsibility of preserving our past—as exemplified by the letter on this page in defense of the controversial East Front remodeling of the Capitol.

In this viewpoint, increasingly common, a nice, neat, accurate reproduction is to be preferred to an original, particularly if the original has suffered with the passage of time and events. This fallacious and dangerous attitude stems from what may be called the Williamsburg syndrome. A superb job of careful reconstruction, Williamsburg has had disastrous side effects on preservation practice that its creators could neither have anticipated nor desired. The Capitol's architectural advisers duly acknowledge their debt to Williamsburg in their letter.

We now tear down the buildings that we have in order to reconstruct the buildings that we have not. We destroy valuable nineteenth-century landmarks or let them decay beyond repair while we "reproduce" eighteenth-century buildings. The fact that there are many who fail to make a moral or qualitative distinction between