

To Preserve New York's Heritage

New York Times (1923-Current file); Aug 7, 1978; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times
pg. A16

To Preserve New York's Heritage

When the New York State Senate reconvenes this week in its handsome, historic State Capitol, it might consider the fate of numerous state-owned structures of similar architectural quality — as well as more modest but equally valuable examples of New York's heritage in other cities and towns. The Senate need hardly lift a finger in this warm weather to do so; it has had



waiting for approval since June an excellent historic preservation bill, already passed unanimously by the Assembly.

This bill's virtues are clear and it has no vices. The main purpose is to create a state preservation policy that would parallel and supplement the established

practices of Federal and municipal governments. The bill is carefully constructed and would cause no hardship anywhere. The bill calls for a State Register of Historic Places, similar to the National Register, to give New York a proper inventory of its historical and architectural resources. It would also create a State Review Council to evaluate the effect of state projects on historic properties, a simple process that does not, unfortunately, take place now. This review would be advisory and it would be held in the early stages of a project so as to cause no delays. There are also provisions for tax benefits to encourage the improvement and preservation of older property.

The law would require the state to consider making use of its own historic buildings and, where feasible, to acquire other historic properties for appropriate government purposes. That would follow the example of a successful Federal policy, which has saved the old post offices in Washington and St. Louis and New York City's Custom House. This solution for fine old buildings of quality and style is as efficient as it is esthetic; it often saves money and energy as well.

As a start the Albany Legislature might even look on its own doorstep, at the State Education Building. When the Legislature's library was recently moved from the vaulted quarters and marbled halls of this landmark structure to the Empire State Plaza, née the Albany Mall, fresh life was given to the familiar joke that new buildings look like the packing cases the old buildings came in. The Mall has drained and discarded this superior structure and others like it. Good works and good legislation begin at home, and this is a preservation bill whose time has long since come.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.