

# Road



# Notes

SOCIETY FOR  
COMMERCIAL  
ARCHEOLOGY

*News*

SUMMER 2008

VOL. 16 NO. 2

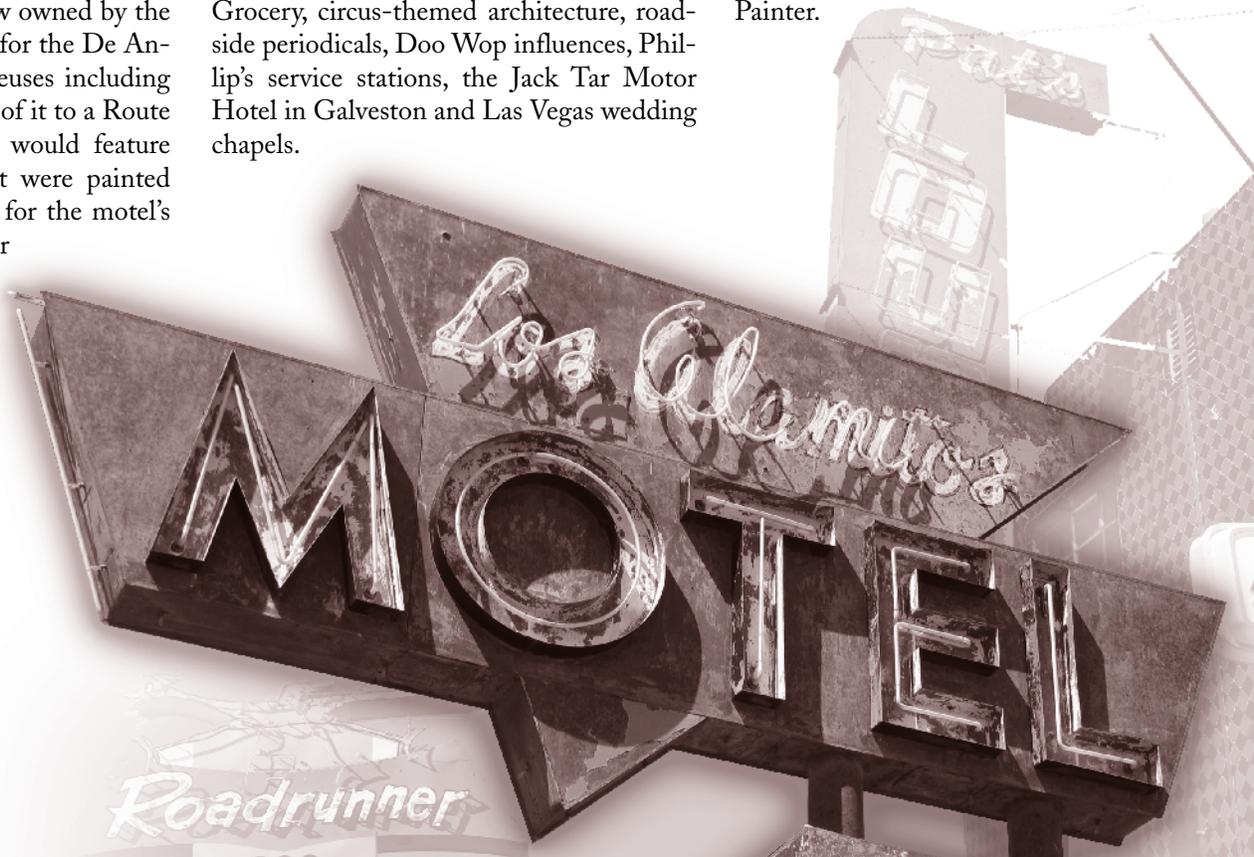
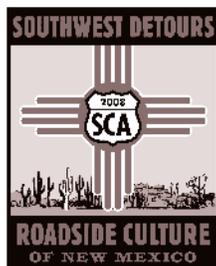
## NEON TOUR ADDED TO SCA CONFERENCE!

— *Douglas Towne*

For those of you who believe the roadside doesn't really come alive until dusk, a neon tour of the Nob Hill area of Albuquerque has been added to the upcoming SCA Conference. Ed Boles, an architect who also serves as the city's historic preservation planner, has volunteered to give a walking tour of this Route 66 neighborhood which is chock-full of neon signs. The Friday night tour is tentatively scheduled to last between one to two hours and start at the De Anza Motor Lodge, now owned by the city. Ed will share plans for the De Anza's potential adaptive reuses including one plan to convert part of it to a Route 66 Visitor Center that would feature the historic murals that were painted on-site by a Zuni artist for the motel's original owner. The tour will conclude with an unofficial post-trip celebration at Kelly's Brew Pub ([www.kellysbrewpub.com](http://www.kellysbrewpub.com)), a successful adaptive reuse of a Ford dealership.

The evening neon tour will follow Friday's symposium that includes 18 presentations. Several papers will focus on aspects of Route 66 including the Mojave River corridor, New Mexico's stretch of the highway, and the Smithsonian's relationship to the famed road. Other symposium topics are as diverse as big-rig infrastructure, parking structures, rest areas, road trips, Michigan's Grand River Avenue, cattle trails, highway naming in the 1920s, applications of material science along the roadside, White Oak Grocery, circus-themed architecture, roadside periodicals, Doo Wop influences, Phillip's service stations, the Jack Tar Motor Hotel in Galveston and Las Vegas wedding chapels.

The SCA Board would like to thank the presenters who include, in order of appearance: Diane Kane, Shannon Sanders McDonald, Joanna M. Dowling, Jeffrey L. Neumann, Daniel Paul, Judith Harrison Kalter, Lee Whiteley, Euan Hague, Emily Koller, Nancy Farm Mannikko, Susan Lassell, Leslie Wolfenden, Robert Autobe, Amy Ballard, Robert Dalton Harris, Diane DeBlois, Michael Hirsch, Cliff Leppke, Guy W. Carwile, and Diane Painter.



# Can Sweetness be Saved?

— LAURA KINIRY

Gingerbread Homes are hard to resist—just ask Hansel and Gretel. A wicked old woman lured them inside her own candy house, deliberately built to bait such sweet-toothed kids. While the intentions of F.H. Bennett—the man behind Hamburg, NJ’s Gingerbread Castle—weren’t malicious, he did know that children (soon-to-be adults) would find such a place irresistible. So irresistible, that the castle still stands after 80 years.

In a state known for roadside attractions (the *Weird U.S.* series began here), Hamburg’s Gingerbread Castle is remarkable. Situated just off Route 93—down Gingerbread Castle Road—in New Jersey’s northwest corner, the castle was the brainchild of F.H. Bennett, a local miller and baker credited with inventing both the Wheatworth Cracker and Milk Bone Dog Biscuits. Bennett commissioned Austrian designer Joseph Urban—whose prior achievements included Khedive’s Cairo Palace, St. Petersburg’s Alexander Bridge, and numerous Ziegfeld Follies sets—to build a fairytale palace for kids. According to Dr. Marion Wood, president of the Hamburg Historical Society and author of the castle was originally called the Gingerbread House, constructed primarily of concrete with a roof

resembling candied frosting, and a hand railing that “turned to stone” if touched. An old postcard featuring the castle’s image describes its “candystick towers, cake icing turrets, and sugar-panned windows.” The castle took two years to build—from 1928–1930—and cost \$250,000.

While the Castle’s exterior attracted visitors, it was the fairytale figurines placed throughout its interior and grounds that cemented its theme park status: Humpty Dumpty sat contently upon a garden wall. Snow White congregated with the seven dwarfs in one of the castle towers. And an old woman lived privately within an outdoor shoe. The castle even housed a witch’s cauldron, said to contain the bones of little boys and girls who never left—a story relayed by local children who acted as tour guides, showing visitors around the castle and its grounds.

Hamburg Borough and the Gingerbread Castle became synonymous. Local streets—like Cinderella Street and Wishing Well Road—were named to reflect fairytales, and street signs reissued with castle depictions attached (a few still remain). Police officers and ambulance drivers began wearing castle patches on their uniforms, and the castle became the borough’s official logo. Hamburg was dubbed, “The Children’s Town.”



By the mid-70s the aging castle had seen multiple owners and was losing favor to more modern attractions, like the newly opened Six Flags Great Adventure, a couple hours south. After operating as a children's fairytale theme park for nearly 50 years, Gingerbread Castle finally closed in the late 1970s. It reopened for a few years as a haunted Halloween venue before a fire closed it permanently in 1993.

Attempts to restore the castle as a children's theme park haven't gotten far. NJ resident Frank Hinger and his wife Lou purchased the property in 2003 with plans to revitalize it, even securing a grant from Hampton Hotel's Save-a-Landmark program in 2004, which was used to repaint the castle exterior. But raising additional funds proved difficult. After unsuccessfully offering the castle on eBay, it was auctioned off by sheriff's sale in January 2007 for approximately \$680,000

Vandalism has been an increasing problem in recent years. When the Weird U.S. boys visited a few years ago, the old woman was gone, but the shoe where she lived remained. A smiling Humpty Dumpty still sat on the wall. And the witch's cauldron stood ready to brew. Since then, says Dr. Wood, Humpty Dumpty has fallen, the shoe's uninhabitable (if it even exists), and the castle's an empty shell. "Even the stained glass windows were stolen," she said.

Local real estate developers Gene Mulvihill and Pat Barton are the Gingerbread Castle's current owners. Mulvihill, who owns the neighboring former Plastoid building and a share in nearby Ballyowen, the state's highest rated public golf course, seems interested in preserving the castle. In a January 2007 article in the New Jersey Herald, Mulvihill states, "It's in (Hamburg's) blood. We're not going to rip the place down, that's not going to happen. Not going to happen."

Last fall, a newly formed Hamburg Historical Commission interested in the castle's preservation led members of the N.J. Historic Preservation Office through the structure, with Mulvihill's permission, attempting to draw attention to the borough's historic resources. But whether Hamburg's Gingerbread Castle will have a fairytale ending remains to be seen.

"The one thing I can tell you for sure is that we are going to restore the Gingerbread Castle," Mulvihill told the New Jersey Herald.

Life should be so sweet.

*Editor's Note: Laura is a SCA member and the author of the Moon Series travel guide to the Garden State, Moon New Jersey.*



Photo: Debra Jane Seltzer

## SOUTHWEST SWEETS *Amy Ballard*

During your visit to Albuquerque, a stop at Buffetts Candies is a must! Since 1956, family-owned Buffetts Candies, with the oversized candy cane running up the building, has been an Albuquerque institution. George Buffet and his team create the freshest candy from natural ingredients on the premises, and his motto "our candy is made to eat, not to keep" proves it. Although Buffetts is best known for their pinon candy, they are also famous for their chocolate-covered marshmallows and other delicious chocolates.

With their landmark candy cane in front of the store, Buffetts is easy to find at 7001 Lomas Blvd., NE. See [www.pinoncandy.com](http://www.pinoncandy.com)

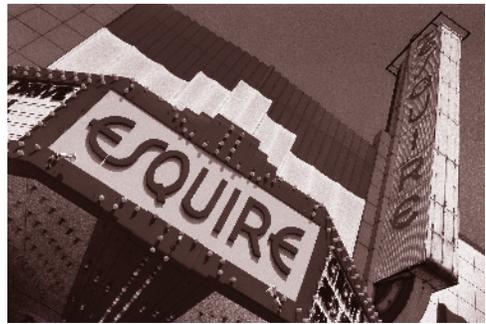
## COFFEE CUP DEMOLITION MUST WAIT

The Coffee Cup Soda Grill building in Charlotte, NC won a year's reprieve from the wrecking ball courtesy of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark Commission. The decision caps nearly two years of efforts to preserve the building that until last year housed one of the city's most culturally significant restaurants.

The Cup opened in 1946 and was known as a place where blacks and whites dined together long before desegregation. Last year, City Council voted to make the restaurant an historic landmark, recognizing its heritage as a place of racial harmony, fellowship and traditional Southern fare. The designation also reflects the building's significance as a rare example of the Art Moderne architectural style and one of the city's few remaining pre-1950 roadside eateries.

In 2005, Beazer Homes USA bought land that included the restaurant for a major development. The company has since exited the Charlotte housing market and wants to sell the site. The restaurant's owners closed the Cup last year, unable to negotiate a new lease with Beazer, and reopened in the University area.

*Stella M. Hopkins, Charlotte Observer, 06/10/08  
Courtesy of SCA Member Neill Herring*



FIVE FAV'S  
**Motor**  
 JOANNE  
**City**  
 DOMKA  
**Memories**

For nearly two decades, I've been cruising back roads searching for disappearing America. Echoes of this era of neighborhood businesses, now rapidly giving way to franchises and mega-malls, is the focus of my art. The intricate details, glowing neon, peeling paint, and long shadows that play across the face of my sign renderings creatively document these once ubiquitous sights found along our roadways.

Born and raised in the Detroit area, I attended Wayne State University College of Fine & Performing Arts on scholarship, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1987. While taking a class in alternative photographic processes I became interested in hand-coloring. With my fascination with history, automobiles and architecture, I created the sign series followed by an automobile series.



The Detroit area in the 1980's and 1990's was exciting to explore. The city was a sprawling metropolis with many major avenues leading to nearby suburbs and towns that were lined with all types of interesting vintage signs and architecture.

Glimpses of past eras existed along every road and byway, teasing the viewer to wonder what it may have been like to step into that business in its heyday, whether taking in a movie at the Esquire Theater (Jefferson Ave, Grosse Pointe Park), dancing at the Vanity Ballroom (Jefferson Ave, Detroit), or sipping a cold glass of Vernor's Ginger Ale while touring the bottling plant on Woodward Avenue in Detroit. The amusing characters of Stiglitz Store for Big Men (Seven Mile Road, Detroit), Grand River Steam Baths (Grand River Avenue, Detroit), Terry Bakery (Michigan Ave - Ypsilanti) and the

tumbling bowling pins of Ypsi-Arbor Bowl on Washtenaw Avenue were irresistible and eye catching. Unfortunately many of these places and signs have now disappeared.

My hand-colored black and white photographic artwork of vintage signage and classic automobiles has been featured in magazines such as Popular Photography, Peterson's Photographic, Photo Techniques, and Automobile Magazine; exhibited nationally, including the prestigious Concours d'Elegance classic automotive show held annually in Detroit; and acquired for private and corporate art collections. For more of my artwork, please see [www.JoanneDomka.com](http://www.JoanneDomka.com)

# IN BRIEF

## IN THE TENT OF TOMORROW A FADING MAP OF YORE

For the first time in decades, there appears to be a chance that a half-acre terrazzo road map of New York State from the 1964-5 World's Fair—an exuberantly overstated mix of small-town parochialism, space-age optimism and Pop Art irony—will be conserved as the valuable artifact it is.

The map is hidden from public view on the floor of the abandoned, roofless Tent of Tomorrow in the New York State Pavilion, at what is now Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens. The 130-by-166-foot map has cracked and crumbled badly. Vandals have wrecked what the freeze thaw cycle has not, and weeds are a steady menace.

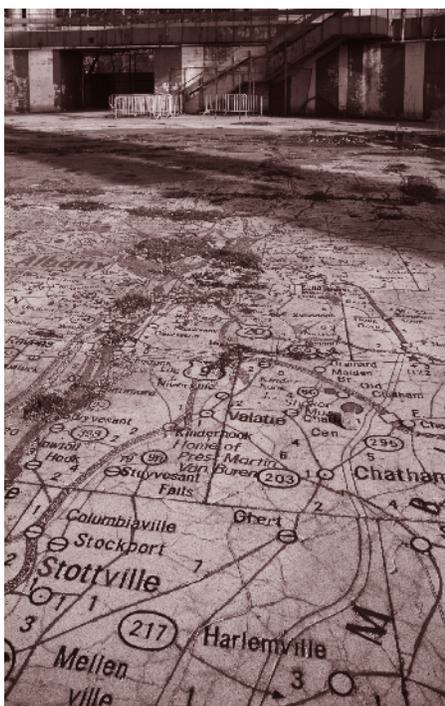
The map was fashioned from enlarged tracings of a Texaco map. Metal borders and black, red and blue plastic letters, numerals and symbols were affixed on panels at the Manhattan Tile and Terrazzo Company. These panels were taken to the Port Morris Tile and Marble Corporation in the Bronx, where terrazzo with various pigments was poured into forms.

Prof. Frank G. Matero, the chairman of the graduate program in historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, is working with his graduate students on conserving four of the 567 4-by-4-foot panels that compose the map. The project was financed by a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. At the moment, there is not funding for further conservation, though it's estimated the whole map could be restored for less than a million dollars.

*David W. Dunlap, New York Times, 04/7/08*

*Courtesy of SCA Member Neill Herring*

*Editors Note: Neil attached the following reminiscence to the above article: I remember visiting this map at the NY World's Fair in 1964, when I was about to start my last year of high school, and on my first visit to NY with my family. It was amazing to me, a highly detailed highway map made more or less permanent on a huge scale. I think, looking back, it may have marked something of a high water line for positive attitudes about auto-centric US culture; the end of the line that started at the GM Building at the 1939 Fair.*



*Photo: Debra Jane Seltzer*

## OWNER PROMISES TO REOPEN ROUTE 66 ORANGE STAND

Progress won't put the squeeze on a Route 66 orange stand if Joe Bono has anything to say about it. The owner of Bono's Restaurant and Deli on Foothill Boulevard in Fontana, CA, where the orange orb occupies a spot in the parking lot, says the stand will open again. "It's ready to go," he says. All it needs is clearance from the California Department of Health Services. Offers come in all the time for its use, Bono said.

The stand was built in the 1930s on Foothill between Maple and Locust avenues, about three miles east of where it rests. The owners sold 12-ounce glasses of orange juice for 10 cents, tourists from the East rode in at night when the air was cool and stopped for a sip and a sack of oranges, he says. In the mid-1990s, the stand was vandalized and started to fall apart. It had been sold to a family in Newport Beach that was going to let it be demolished. The Historical Society was later given the orange.

The society moved it to Wal-Mart's property on Foothill, but the company wanted it removed in 1997. They approached Bono with a request, he says. "Please, could you spare the orange?" they asked him. Bono did. And the orange stands "ripe" next to his restaurant today.

*Josh Dulaney*

*The Sun: San Bernardino and the Inland Empire, 06/30/08  
Courtesy of SCA Member Gloria Scott*

## ANDERSON'S ART TO AUCTION AT ALBUQUERQUE *Douglas Towne*

SCA member Brian Anderson recently gifted our organization with a very generous donation—two art works created by his late father, Warren Anderson. These two pieces will be part of a silent auction at the Albuquerque conference with proceeds going to the SCA. Warren was a Professor of Art at the University of Arizona for many years, the author of *Vanishing Roadside America*, and a long-time SCA member.

The second of the silent auction works is "Lincoln Highway Gas Pump," a 15-by-9 inch prismatic pencil drawing executed in the manner of the old, high-chrome, linen-textured, bordered postcards. Don't forget to bring your checkbooks to the Duke City!

*Photo: Jessica Creedon*

## BACK IN BUSINESS: ASHEVILLE EATERY REOPENS WITH PERIOD TOUCHES

A building one expert calls “the highest pinnacle of art deco” in the area has come back to life. The renovated S&W Cafeteria building at 60 Patton Avenue in downtown Asheville, NC now houses the newly opened upscale restaurant S&W Steak & Wine and the Corner House, a coffee shop and casual restaurant.

That gives the public a chance once again to eat and drink among the 1929 building’s period touches, including porcelain tiles on the walls, terrazzo floors, sculpted plaster ceilings and steps made of travertine marble. The cafeteria closed in 1974, a casualty of the movement of much of the city’s retail activity to Asheville Mall. The building saw various uses over the years but had been closed for several years before developer Steve Moberg decided to take the plunge and put it back in use.

The S&W was designed by architect Douglas Ellington, also responsible for iconic structures including City Hall and First Baptist Church. It was part of a small chain of cafeterias in the South started in Charlotte by two men who served as mess sergeants together in World War I.

*Mark Barrett*

*Asheville Citizen-Times, 06/8/08*

*Courtesy of SCA Member Neill Herring*

## KELLY SERVICE STATION, MOTEL GOING STRONG AFTER 50 YEARS IN ALABAMA

In the mid-1950s, when the Kelly family of Saraland, Alabama, a town north of Mobile, opened their gas station and motel along U.S. 43, the highway was a two-lane concrete road, the motel was \$5 a night, and the gasoline was 20 cents a gallon. With its gravity-fed pumps, wash rack and general store, Kelly’s was a town hub, recalls Toby Kelly, 70, who runs the place these days while his mother, Gertrude, 94, checks in on things from the family’s house behind the motel.

“I’m the last of a dying breed,” Kelly says.

No matter the changing brands of gas; Gulf, Standard, BP, now Pride; Kelly’s family has retained ownership of the station and the sprawling property with its motel and trailer park. He still waits on folks who pull up to the full-service pumps at Kelly’s and even does mechanical work. Three-quarters of his customers, he estimates, are regulars.

The motel once was an overnight stop-off for travelers on U.S. 43. Kelly remembers how the highway was packed with travelers to Mobile for events like the Senior Bowl football game in the days before Interstate 65 was the main north-south corridor. Nearby downtown Prichard was a shopping destination with a J.C. Penney and a Kress.

*Roy Hoffman*

*Press Register, 05/19/08*

*Courtesy of SCA Member Neill Herring*



*Photo:  
Debra Jane  
Seltzer*

## BEACH READING

Looking for some entertaining roadside reading on your vacation this summer? Check out the SCA’s book store ([www.sca-roadside.org/?page\\_id=16](http://www.sca-roadside.org/?page_id=16)) to find books, tour guides, and back issues of the SCA Journal and News. Contact the SCA Store, c/o Greg Smith, 1712 West Saint Johns Avenue, Austin TX 78757-1822.

## MURAL TESTS VERMONT LAW THAT FORBIDS BILLBOARDS

It was meant to be a throwback to the days of romantic Sunday drives. A mural painted on the side of a red barn urging passing drivers to “See Bellows Falls,” a town in Vermont whose Main Street conjures up bygone days.

But despite its retro charm, the sign has become a lightning rod of controversy in a state that, for four decades, has been determined to keep its landscape free of commercial intrusion. In February, a state board ruled that the painting, finished in October, runs afoul of the state’s billboard law, and must be removed. In response, the legislature passed a measure on Saturday that exempts this mural and ones like it, hand-painted signs that urge drivers to visit a designated downtown, from the law.

Gov. Jim Douglas, a Republican, has yet to sign the measure, which was attached to a state transportation bill. Line-item vetoes are not allowed in Vermont, and it is unlikely Mr. Douglas will veto the entire \$415 million bill when it arrives on his desk in the next few weeks. The select board in the town of Rockingham, where the mural stands and which includes Bellows Falls, unanimously approved the mural Tuesday night, a requirement of the new law.

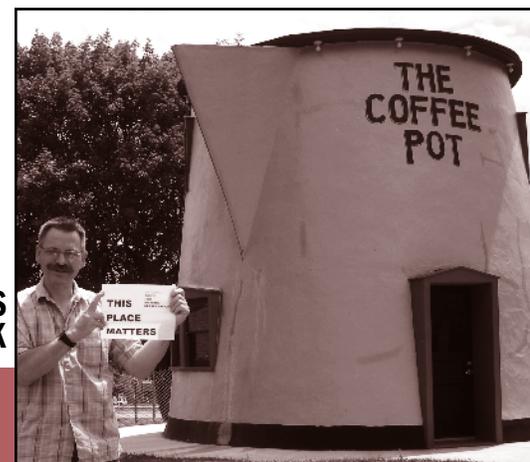
*Katie Zezima*

*New York Times,*

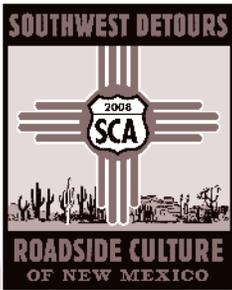
*05/8/08*

*Courtesy of SCA*

*Member Phil Langdon*

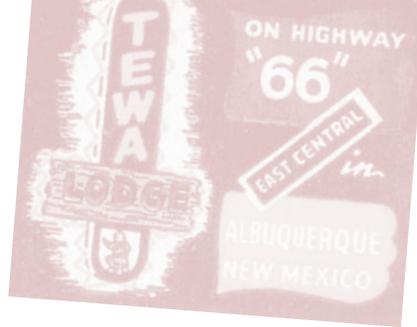


**WHAT PLACE MATTERS TO YOU? SEE BACK**



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**SIZZLIN' SUMMER ISSUE:  
ALBUQUERQUE MUST-SEES, GINGERBREAD CASTLE & MORE...**



CASA GRANDE LODGE ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



## FROM THE EDITOR *Douglas Towne*

Before you hit the blue highways on your next vacation, SCA member Jerry McCoy urges everyone to pack their camera and take along a "This Place Matters" placard obtained from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's (NTHP) website ([www.preservationnation.org/thisplacematters](http://www.preservationnation.org/thisplacematters)). Jerry was photographed holding his sign (see image on Page 7) standing in front of his favorite place to get a cup of java, the Coffee Pot in Bedford, PA. The photograph is now posted on the Trust's website along with images of other travelers positioned in front of their favorite buildings.

Jerry, who serves as President of the Silver Spring, MD Historical Society, encourages fellow SCA members to follow his example and let the NTHP know that preserving roadside architecture such as The Coffee Pot is as important as protecting more traditional historical buildings.

Lincoln Highway fans will recognize The Coffee Pot as a stunning example of "programmatically architecture" that Jerry first discovered in the early 1980s during commutes between Washington D.C. and his hometown of Lorain, OH. He recalls the building "...being in terrible shape and seemed on the verge of demolition by neglect." Fortunately, in the late 1990s the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor moved the famed building to the entrance of the Bedford County Fairgrounds where it was renovated and reopened for business in 2004.

**What's your favorite "This Place Matters"?**



*The SCA News is published quarterly by the Society for Commercial Archeology, Inc., a non-profit organization.*

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