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*In this article Robert R. Garvey, Jr., Executive Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, urges a large increase in state action—along with private efforts and local and national governmental programs—to save historic landmarks in America. After indicating the scope of private and governmental activity in this field up to now, he emphasizes the importance of surveys, enabling legislation and financial aid as essential parts for a successful state program.*

## State Participation in American Landmark Preservation

*by Robert R. Garvey, Jr.*

NEW YORK STATE was the first agency, public or private, officially to preserve a landmark in the United States. On July 4, 1850, General Winfield Scott came from West Point to Newburgh to raise the flag over the first historic house museum in the United States—the Hasbrouck House which had served as General Washington's headquarters from April 1782 to August 1783. In 1848, under the United States Deposit Fund, it had been acquired from Jonathan Hasbrouck, II by the Commissioners of Orange County. The Commissioners, in their desire to preserve the 1750 house, appealed to Governor Hamilton Fish. He recommended in a message of 1850 that the venerable building become a state property, and a bill was passed making the state acquisition possible.

With this action, New York not only preceded her sister states into the preservation movement, but also the federal government, whose first acquisition was Casa Grande National Monument, Arizona, in 1889. New York's was also followed by the first private endeavor, represented by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association in Virginia with its rescue of *Mount Vernon* in 1858. Almost a century

later, the National Trust for Historic Preservation accepted its first historic house, *Woodlawn Plantation* also at Mount Vernon, Virginia, in 1951.

Other state action followed that of New York, but over the years New York and the states have not maintained their lead, although many states have sizeable budgets for state-owned landmarks. New Jersey, for example, spends approximately \$400,000 a year on its historic sites. According to the State Bureau of Parks and Recreation, half is private donation and half is state budgeting, and the total would rise considerably if much of the time spent to maintain the sites were not donated.

At a September 1963 Preservation Conference cosponsored by the National Trust and Colonial Williamsburg, it was generally agreed that, although there was a variety of private and federal projects, the states were lagging in development of programs to protect landmarks. In addition, an ironic note was sounded when New York was branded by a participant as "one of the fifty states which had done the least for the preservation of its architectural history."