

March 21, 2000

Addresses:

Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park (NPS)
Director, National Park Service (NPS)
Chair, Advisory Board to the Secretary of the Interior on the National Park System (NPS)
Chief Historian, National Park Service (NPS)
Keeper, National Register of Historic Places (NPS)
State Historic Preservation Officer, Pennsylvania
President, AIA Central Pennsylvania
President, Society of Architectural Historians
President, HABS/HAER Foundation
Dion Neutra

At its meeting on March 19, 2000 in Washington DC, the American Institute of Architects Committee on Historic Resources adopted the following resolution:

The American Institute of Architects Historic Resources Committee views with alarm the pending demolition of the Visitor Center and Cyclorama Building at the Gettysburg National Military Park. Designed by Richard Neutra and constructed as part of the Mission 66 program of the National Park Service, it was, and is one of the most important buildings constructed by the NPS during the 20th century.

We endorse the findings of the National Historic Landmarks Committee that the building meets the criteria for National Historic Landmark status and concur that it should be so designated. We further endorse the findings of the National Park Service's own study of Mission 66 visitor centers that "The Gettysburg Cyclorama is historically valuable, not merely as an example of modern architecture, but as a Mission 66 visitor center in a national park. It represents the collaboration of a world-famous architectural firm and the National Park Service at one of the nation's most significant historic sites...If the Gettysburg Cyclorama no longer conforms to accepted natural and cultural resource practice or to current architectural fashions, it possesses its own historical importance. In 1999 visitors can still catch a glimpse of the idealism that impressed tourists in the 1960s. Like the painting it shelters, the Cyclorama is an artifact of another era and represents a significant aspect of the commemoration of the Gettysburg Battlefield."

This Committee, which is dedicated to the preservation of historically valuable structures in Architecture from all eras, cannot condone the demolition of this nationally important 20th century icon, designed by an internationally acclaimed 20th century architect, and urge that the decision to demolish the building be reconsidered and reversed.

On behalf of the American Institute of Architects Historic Resources Committee, I request that you give serious consideration to the Committee's viewpoint and recommendation.

Very truly yours,

Robert Burley, FAIA, Chairman
AIA Historic Resources Committee