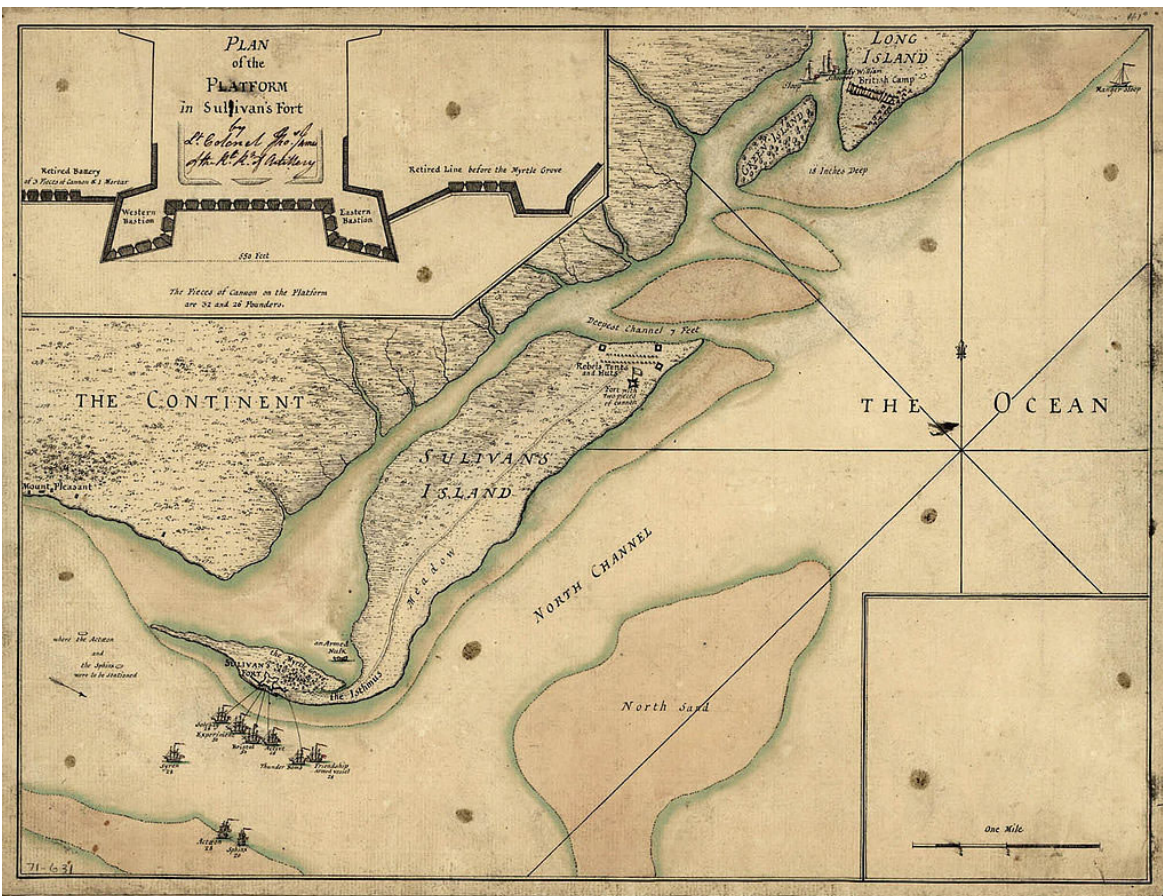


CHAPTER 3

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Brief History of Sullivan's Island

Sullivan's Island takes its name from Captain Florence O'Sullivan who came to America in 1669. O'Sullivan was elected to South Carolina's First Provincial Parliament in 1672 and was later appointed to take charge of a signal cannon that was placed on the island. This cannon was to be fired as a warning when ships approached the mouth of the Charleston harbor. In its early years, the island also served as an embarkation point for those entering the South Carolina colony. A number of pest houses, or lazarettoes, were built to house and quarantine persons, free and slave, entering Charleston who may pose a risk of disease. The island was a major point of entry into America during the slave trade and thousands were temporarily housed on the island before being transported to the mainland. Few residents lived on the island well into the 1700s. When hostilities between the Colonies and England occurred in 1776, construction started on the first major fort at the western end of the island. The fort was built under the command of Colonel William Moultrie and consisted of sixteen foot thick palmetto logs. The fort was built at the western end of the island to protect the entrance into the harbor. In June of 1776, English forces under the command of Sir Peter Parker attacked the fort by sea and land but were decisively repulsed. This was one of the first major victories by the Patriot army in the Revolutionary War.



View of the British attack on Sullivan's Island in June of 1776 (Image courtesy SC Department of Archives and History).

With America granted independence after the war, the federal government recognized the strategic importance of Fort Moultrie and purchased four acres of land from the state in 1796. Much of the original fortification had eroded from the elements and a new fort constructed of masonry was completed by 1811. This fort served as an important defense post for Charleston into the mid-19th century. One of the more notable soldiers stationed at the fort during these years was writer Edgar Allen Poe who served from 1827 to 1828. The island was the setting for his famous story "The Gold Bug."

South Carolina's secession from the United States in 1860 placed the Federal garrison at the fort in a difficult defensive position and the troops abandoned the fort and moved to Fort Sumter in the Charleston harbor. Following the surrender of Fort Sumter, all of the fortifications around Charleston were occupied by Confederate forces. Fort Moultrie sustained extensive damage from Union ships and shore batteries until the Confederate army evacuated Charleston in February of 1865. After the Civil War, the fort was abandoned for many years and only limited improvements were made over the next several decades.

In the late 19th century, improving coastal defenses throughout America was a priority for the Federal government. The growing tensions with Spain in 1897 led the Federal government to send the 1st U.S. Artillery to Fort Moultrie to expand the defenses. In February of 1898, war broke out between America and Spain. Although this conflict ended by the end of 1898, the Federal government moved forward with an ambitious plan for Fort Moultrie. In 1902, the Federal government took possession of much of the western section of the island and built new fortifications, dwellings for officers and enlisted men, and numerous support buildings. The fort was expanded and improved throughout the early 20th century and during World War II. The fort was deactivated in 1947 and much of the property was sold to individuals or the Township of Sullivan's Island. The historic fort is now owned by the National Park Service and is an important tourist site on the island.



The Town of Moultrieville is shown in this ca. 1900 view from Battery Thompson. In the distance can be seen the bell tower of the 1892 Post Chapel. (Image courtesy SC Department of Archives and History).



The Sullivan's Island Lighthouse was upgraded and replaced several times. This shows the lighthouse in 1885. (Image courtesy SC Department of Archives and History).

The early years of residential development on the island went through several variations. In 1787, the state legislature appropriated the island for public purposes and mandated that no land could be owned in fee simple. Acquiring lots was through the granting of licenses which allowed the owner to build dwellings. Other lots were "pre-empted," a type of squatter's rights, where the owner was granted a license after building a dwelling. Despite the lack of fee-simple ownership, numerous lots were developed with houses by the late 1700s and town commissioners were appointed, property was assessed, streets were laid out, the early pest houses were removed.

The town of Moultrieville arose next to Fort Moultrie and this community incorporated in 1817. As many as two hundred houses comprised the town and many of the dwellings were used as summer dwellings by Charleston residents. These early houses appear to have been simple frame structures built for summer use and not as year-round residences. The frequency of storms and hurricanes led to a continuous cycle of building and rebuilding. Notable hurricanes in the 19th century occurred in 1822, 1845, and 1854 resulting in the loss of many homes. Despite these many setbacks, Sullivan's Island continued to be a popular retreat throughout the early 1800s for residents in the region seeking the cool ocean breezes and other island amenities. Regular passenger ferry service from Charleston to the island provided residents with daily excursions as well as longer stays.

Many of the homes in Moultrieville were damaged or demolished during the Civil War as part of the bombardment of the fort by Federal forces. Following the war, residents rebuilt and the Moultrieville Post Office was established in 1875. A bridge was constructed across the marshlands from Mount Pleasant providing greater access to the island. In these years the population gradually increased and new homes were constructed in the central and eastern sections of the island. More substantial homes were built on the island by the late 19th century and these were typically of frame construction, built on raised foundations and one- to two-stories in height. Several boarding houses and hotels were also built on the island in these years such as the New Brighton Hotel built in 1884.

Access to the island was enhanced in 1898 when Dr. Joseph Lawrence built a trolley line from Mt. Pleasant through Sullivan's Island and on east to the Isle of Palms. Known as the Charleston and Seashore Railroad Company, the trolley extended through undeveloped land at the east end of the island and soon made this area more attractive for residences. The community of Atlanticville developed along the trolley line and a post office was established at the town in 1903. To operate the trolley and electrical generating station was built which provided electricity for island residents and telephone service was established in 1913. Residential construction was intense in these years with houses built on all of the lots by 1917. Ferries transported automobiles to and from the island in the early 20th century and 1926, the Cove Inlet Bridge connecting the island with Mt. Pleasant was opened. The automobile traffic made the trolley line obsolete and it was gradually removed. The trolley's heritage is still evident on the island with streets named for the many stops or stations along its route such as Station 19.

After World War II, residential development on the island continued to increase. The deactivation of Fort Moultrie in 1947 resulted in the sale of the existing houses to private individuals and the opening of former government land for development. Many new houses were built on the island and by 1960, the population stood at 1,358 residents. Continued slow growth occurred in the late 20th century with an emphasis on maintaining the residential character of the island. A small commercial area containing restaurants and shops evolved along several blocks of Middle Street in these years. From 1960 to 1980, an additional 500 residents moved to the island as the population surged during these decades.

Hurricane Hugo had a devastating affect when it came ashore on September 23, 1989. The bridge to the mainland was destroyed and over eighty historic houses were either demolished or so badly damaged they were later razed. After the hurricane, rising property values contributed to replacement of traditional vernacular small-scale island houses with much larger modern homes. A number of historic dwellings were also remodeled and enlarged to the point where they no longer retained integrity of design. These factors led to concerns over the loss of the island's traditional character and in 2003, the Town of Sullivan's Island enacted a Historic Preservation Ordinance and created a Design Review Board (DRB). Since its creation, the DRB has assisted in guiding appropriate rehabilitation of historic homes and compatible new development.

In recent decades, concerns over climate impacts and sea levels have resulted in a number of the historic homes being elevated to meet updated flood regulations. In 2016, a new Town Hall and Fire and Police Headquarters buildings were completed on Middle Street reflecting traditional island designs. In 2020, the population was estimated at 1,891 residents and Sullivan's Island is one of the most desirable residential locations in the Charleston region.

(Sources for the historical and architectural narratives in this manual are the "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Documentation Form" prepared in 2007 by Schneider Preservation Inc., Images of America, Sullivan's Island" published by the Gadsden Cultural Center in 2004, and "A Study of the Vernacular Beach Cottage Typologies of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina and Documentary Drawings of the Nathaniel Barnwell House for the Historic American Building Survey," by Amelia Millar in 2010).

Architectural Development

The historic dwellings on Sullivan's Island have a distinct character expressing their heritage as a 19th and early 20th century resort summer community. The majority of the dwellings were built of frame construction as seasonal summer dwellings. Most were built with at least one porch to capture the ocean breezes and with numerous windows and doors to allow for the free flow of air. A common term to describe these dwellings is "vernacular" meaning they reflect local builder's designs and materials typical in the region rather than those designed by an architect. The dwellings were generally built in central hall or hall-parlor plans with interior chimneys. Many were built on raised pier foundations of brick or wood to withstand high water and floods. Decorative elements on the dwellings are generally limited to vergeboard on the porches and eaves as well as milled porch columns. Over time, many dwellings received added rooms and porches on side and rear elevations.

A second typology of buildings constructed on the island are those associated with its military occupation from the late 1700s to 1947. In addition to Fort Moultrie, the Federal government constructed a new series of fortifications in the 1890s and early 1900s along with officers' housing, barracks for enlisted men, a post chapel, and numerous support facilities. When the military post was decommissioned in 1947, most of the buildings were sold to private individuals. The rows of Senior Officers' housing on P'on Avenue and Junior Officers' housing on Middle Street are of particular note and the two-story dwellings have been well preserved.

The historic resources of the island were first inventoried in 1987. Many of the dwellings identified in this survey were damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in September of 1989. Architectural surveys completed in 2005 and 2006 found that three concentrations of historic properties remained that met National Register criteria as historic districts. The historic districts of Moultrieville, Sullivan's Island, Atlanticville and the Fort Moultrie Quartermaster and Support Facilities were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. Since 2007, property values on the island have soared and many historic dwellings have been enlarged and expanded as part of remodeling and rehabilitation projects. Other dwellings were razed and new homes built on the site. To evaluate the current condition of the island's historic resources, a new architectural survey began in 2023 and is scheduled to be completed by late 2024.



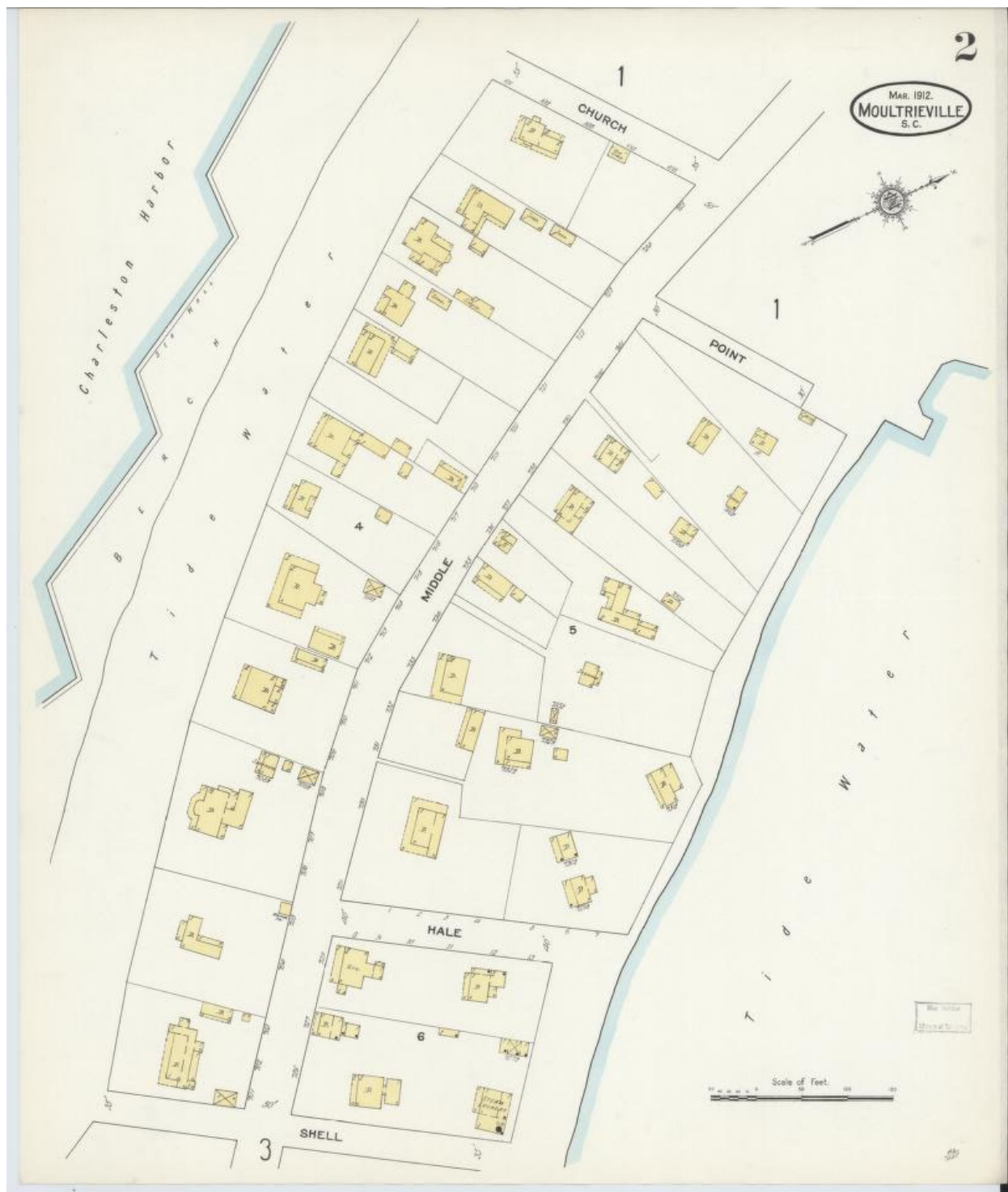
Fort Moultrie Officers' Junior Quarters dwelling built ca. 1905 at 1705 Middle Street.



Buildings associated with the history of Fort Moultrie include the ca. 1925 Non-Commissioned Officers' Club at 1450 Middle Street (left) and the ca. 1930 Post Theater at 1454 Middle Street (right).



The Fort Moultrie Commissary built ca. 1905 was remodeled into apartments and is an example of the adaptive reuse of the military buildings after the fort was decommissioned in 1947 (1504 Middle Street).



Moultrieville was mapped by the Sanborn Fire insurance Company in 1912. The community contained many frame dwellings (shown as yellow) with a wide variety of floor plans. Many of the houses depicted on the map were lost as a result of Hurricane Hugo. (Map courtesy of the Library of Congress).

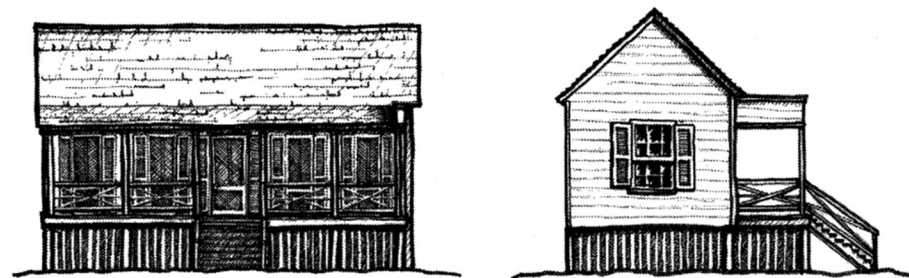
The architectural character of Sullivan's Island was the subject of a Master's thesis by Clemson University student Amelia Millar in 2010. This study identifies a number of vernacular house forms on the island with common designs and details. The study includes line drawings showing floor plans, porch designs, and typical wings and additions. The architectural legacy of the island was also detailed in the book "Sullivan's Island," published in 2004 by the Gadsden Cultural Center. The book includes numerous photographs of historic and present-day homes depicting the growth and development of the island.



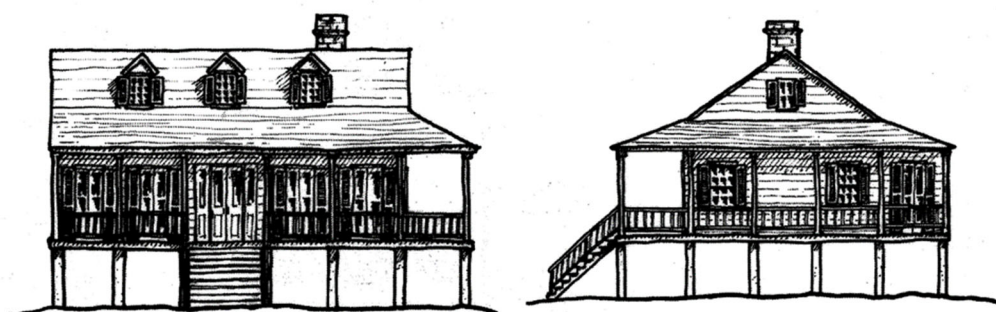
This photograph shows a one-story vernacular dwelling ca. 1900 described as the "Gibbes" House on Sullivan's Island. It is representative of the typical one-story houses with front porches. (Courtesy of the Historic Charleston Foundation Archives).



This two-story vernacular dwelling from ca. 1900 described as the "Holiday House" represents the type of larger cottages built on the island. (Courtesy of the Historic Charleston Foundation Archives).



Vernacular typologies on Sullivan's Island include a one-story front porch cottage with parapet as at 1010 Osceola Street.



Another common typology is a one and one-half story cottage with an "L" shaped porch, (2504 I'on Avenue).



The dwelling at 2301 Myrtle Street is a notable example of a one-story, side-gabled vernacular design.



Many of the historic homes were enlarged over time with lateral or rear wings as at 1808 I'on Avenue.



A number of two-story vernacular houses were also built on the island (2408 Myrtle Street).

Post-World War II Buildings

The design guidelines for Sullivan's Island primarily apply to traditional island resources which reflect the island's architectural development from the 19th century to World War II. Properties built from 1945 to the 1960s, are typically residences built in the Ranch style of the period. These are often one-story dwellings of brick veneer or frame construction with modest detailing. The majority of these dwellings are not considered significant to the island's architectural character. However, they may still possess characteristics that make them important to overall district character. They may possess design elements such as scale, massing, setback, lot placement, and materials that have the potential to positively affect neighboring historic resources.

When demolition or alterations are proposed for these types of dwellings within the historic districts, the DRB may review these applications with more leniency than for traditional island properties. Each case will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine how the proposed work will impact the property, adjacent properties, the streetscape, and the historic district.



Examples of post-World War II buildings include the Ranch style dwellings at 1707 Middle Street built in 1962 (above) and 305 Station 20th Street built in 1965 (below).



Treatment Options for Resiliency: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction

Changes to a building's exterior or its setting reviewed by the Beaufort HPC can take the form of one of four common treatment options for historic buildings: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, or Reconstruction. The definition for each of the treatment options listed below is taken from *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (1992, Updated 2017).

Preservation

Preservation focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time. It is the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Preservation is the preferred treatment option for resiliency projects when the property's distinctive materials, features, and spaces are essentially intact and do not require extensive repair or replacement. Work generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features, rather than replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not generally within the scope of preservation.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a practical approach to preservation that acknowledges the need to alter and/or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses, while retaining the property's historic character. It is the process of repairing or altering an historic building for an efficient, contemporary use while retaining its historic features. For resiliency projects rehabilitation may include changes to a property's foundation, the installation of flood vents, rebuilding of stairs, and relocation of utilities.

Restoration

Restoration involves the accurate depiction of a building as it appeared at a particular period in time, by removing later features and/or reconstructing missing features. Formerly quite popular, today restoration is a rarely used option outside of a museum setting and should only be used when the property's design and appearance from a particular period outweighs the potential loss of extant materials and where there is substantial and physical evidence for the restoration work. Any resiliency restoration project would likely involve some compromises on the height of the foundation and other treatments to protect against flooding.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction is the process of depicting the form, features, and detailing of a no longer surviving building for interpretative or historical purposes, such as in a public park or museum. Reconstruction may also refer to the use of newly constructed parts or features which replace no longer extant features, again based on historical research. As in the case with restoration, accurate reconstruction may not be possible due to the requirements for elevation or floodproofing.