

December 9, 2005

**Association for Preservation Technology International
Hurricane Katrina Team #2 Report**

Biloxi/Gulfport, Mississippi
November 29 – December 6, 2005

Assessment Team Members

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The following is a brief overview of the activities of the second APT Hurricane Katrina Volunteer Team. The efforts of this team were organized by Brian Robinson and coordinated in the field by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), the Mississippi Heritage Trust (MHT), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). All members of the team would like to express their deepest appreciation to Jennifer Baughn, MDAH, for all of her hard work which included everything from supervising field activities to cleaning the bathroom and kitchen in the “Preservation House”. Jennifer, we salute you!

The second APT Hurricane Katrina Volunteer Team arrived in Biloxi, Mississippi the evening of November 28th. Unlike the first APT team, which was housed by a local family, the second APT team was privileged to be the first volunteer team to stay in the newly inaugurated “Preservation House”. The leasing of this early 20th century home is a joint project between the NTHP, the MHT, and the MDAH. The goal of this joint effort is to establish Preservation House as the field headquarters for volunteer preservation recovery efforts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Preservation House is located in downtown Biloxi at the foot of the heavily damaged Beau Rivage Hotel and Casino. This wood frame structure, which was partially flooded by Hurricane Katrina, has no

downstairs heat, only one functioning tub and toilet, several missing windows and a leaky roof. Despite these inconveniences, it was a great place to base our operations and proved to be a very flexible facility.

Goals

The main goal of our team was to assist the MDAH with structural assessments of heavily damaged early 20th century homes in the Gulfport area. The team assessed over 70 structures, filled out ATC-45 survey forms, took digital photographs, and met with individual homeowners offering advice as to how to undertake basic structural stabilization and recovery. In addition, letters offering suggestions for recovery were written and attached to the houses when the owners were absent. The team observed that many houses were off their foundations and had been impacted by heavy debris floating in the storm surge. Types of heavy debris still seen in the area include trees, cars, large industrial paper rolls, and shipping containers.

In addition to the Gulfport survey, members of the APT team were asked to structurally assess the Sullivan/Wright Cottages located in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. These structures, designed by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in 1890, were heavily damaged by the storm surge and are currently for sale. While conducting our assessments, students from the Savannah College of Art and Design were engaged in assisting the owners with recovering missing interior elements from the large debris field located behind the cottages. It is hoped that the assessment information along with continuing efforts to recover important pieces of the interior will assist the current owners with identifying a buyer who will appreciate the significance of these structures. For more information on these houses see www.savewright.org.

On our final day in the field our team was able to meet with a newly arrived team from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. This group, led by APT members Tom Taylor and Bill Barlow, was assigned to take our place in the field. We were able to share our experiences and to assist them with getting up to speed regarding the process of data collection and field assessments.

While the APT team was in the field, I was also responsible for supervising the work of 25 students and faculty from the Savannah College of Art and Design, School of Building Arts. These students were working on various projects in Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Ocean Springs and several were able to meet informally with the APT team and share experiences and information relating to recovery efforts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. I believe that all participants would agree that this interaction was a beneficial experience for both groups.

APT Hurricane Katrina Team #3

The next APT volunteer team is scheduled to be in Mississippi from January 23-30, 2006. Anyone interested in assisting with this team should contact me at the number or email listed below. A special thank you should go out to all the professionals who have

dedicated their time, talent, and money to these important efforts. The need in Mississippi is beyond description. Please consider joining us in this important effort. If you are unable to join a team please consider making a donation to the Mississippi Heritage Trust in support of volunteer recovery efforts.

Hope you have a happy holiday season!

Brian Scott Robinson

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