History and Definitions

The field of architectural conservation emerged out of the Historic Preservation movement as a new and distinct discipline in the late 1960s. Development of the profession was gradual, due in part to a shift in emphasis from the preservation of buildings primarily because of their associative and commemorative value to their cultural value as large artifacts. With increased recognition of the significance of the retention of original materials, preservationists directed their energies toward a more scientific approach, including characterization of building materials and analysis of the decay or deterioration mechanisms that result in their destruction. This shift was facilitated in Virginia by the work of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and the National Park Service and resulted in the placement of greater emphasis on the preservation of original fabric through preventive maintenance and conservation treatments.

Architectural conservation is one of the newest specialties in conservation and practitioners are expected to conform to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice of the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC). The development of an architectural conservation ethic at Colonial Williamsburg dates to 1928 with the formulation of the Decalogue by the Restoration architects.

Architectural Conservation is the profession devoted to the preservation of architecture for the future. Architectural conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care, supported by research and education.

Examination: The investigation of a structure or architectural fragment including the identification of the extent and causes of alteration and deterioration.

Documentation: The recording in a permanent format of information derived from conservation activities.

Treatment: The deliberate alteration of the chemical and/or physical aspects of a property by prolonging its existence. Treatment may consist of protection, preservation, stabilization, rehabilitation, and/or restoration.

Protection: Treatment intended to affect the physical condition of a property by defending or guarding it from deterioration, loss or attack, or to cover or shield the property from danger or injury. Such treatment is generally of a temporary nature and anticipates future treatments.

Preservation: Treatment procedures intended to minimize the chemical and physical deterioration and damage and that prevent loss of informational content. Such treatment is intended to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a structure as well as the existing form and features of a site.

Stabilization: Treatment procedures intended to maintain the integrity of the architecture and to minimize deterioration. Such treatment is intended to maintain structural stability of an unsafe property while maintaining the essential form as it exists at present.

Rehabilitation: Treatment procedures intended to return a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features of a property which are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values.

Restoration: Treatment procedures intended to accurately recover the form and details of a property and its setting as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of later work or by the replacement of missing earlier work.
**Preventive Care:** The mitigation of deterioration and damage to a property through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: environmental conditions, maintenance, integrated pest management, safety and security, and emergency preparedness and response.