

Sonnenschein

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Melissa Anderson
Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP
(213) 892-5025
mganderson@sonnenschein.com

FEDERAL COURT HALTS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PLAN TO DEMOLISH HISTORIC GETTYSBURG CYCLORAMA CENTER

(WASHINGTON, April 2, 2010)—Historic preservation advocates have prevailed in a decade-long fight against demolition of the historic Gettysburg Cyclorama Center.

In a comprehensive ruling, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia upheld a challenge filed by the Recent Past Preservation Network, Christine Madrid French and Dion Neutra. The court held that the U.S. National Park Service failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before deciding to tear down the historic building, and ordered the agency to consider alternatives to demolition.

The preservation advocates were represented *pro bono* by Nicholas Yost and Matthew Adams of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP, a national law firm known for its work on NEPA issues. Mr. Adams was pleased with the ruling, saying “Two federal judges have now looked at this case, and both have concluded that the Park Service must comply with federal law before taking any action on the Cyclorama Center; hopefully, this will mark the end of the litigation process and the beginning of a productive discussion with the Park Service about how best to preserve the Cyclorama Center and the Gettysburg battlefield.”

The Cyclorama Center was designed by world-renowned architect Richard Neutra as part of the park service’s landmark Mission 66 program, a billion-dollar initiative aimed at protecting park resources. The building, completed in part to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Civil War battle of Gettysburg, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

“This ruling recognizes that great modern architecture is an important historic resource, and that it should be valued and protected under federal law,” said Ms. French, an historian and expert on mid-century architecture.

Despite national support for preservation of Neutra’s work and a concurrent rise of public interest in mid century modern architecture, the Park Service planned to demolish the building as part of an effort to make changes to the Gettysburg battlefield. Now, the agency will have to reconsider that plan.

“We hope they revisit the idea of reusing the building,” said Dion Neutra, son of Richard Neutra and project architect for the building. “My father’s vision for the building was to address the notion of reconciliation, as Lincoln did in his Gettysburg Address,” said Mr. Neutra, who added that creative reuse of the Cyclorama Center could include exhibit space devoted to helping the public understand the Gettysburg battlefield’s original 1863 appearance.

About Sonnenschein:

With more than 700 lawyers and other professionals in 13 offices in the United States and Europe, and a global reach throughout the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, Sonnenschein serves the legal and public interest needs of many of the world's best-known and most admired businesses, nonprofits and individuals. Founded in 1906, Sonnenschein is a leader in innovative legal services, serving our clients through integrated, inter-office cooperation and teamwork among practice groups to provide efficient, effective and timely legal services and business counseling. For more information, visit www.sonnenschein.com.

#