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National Register of Historic Places Program: Frequently Asked Questions

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

What are the results of listing?

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Can I modify, remodel, or renovate, my historic house?

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How old does a property have to be to qualify for listing?

I want to know if a property is listed, how can I do that?

I am a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, what can you do for me?

I want to use the photographs in your files, is it copyrighted?

What are the definitions of some of the terms and acronyms you use?

What is the difference between a National Park, a National Monument, a National Memorial, a National Historical Park, etc?

What is the preferred method of citation for a National Register of Historic Places nomination file?

These FAQs never answer my question, is it possible to actually talk to a real live person?

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Park Service administers the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. National Register properties have significance to the history of their community state, or the nation. Nominations for listing historic properties come from State Historic Preservation Officers, from Federal Preservation Officers for properties owned or controlled by the United States Government, and from Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for properties on Tribal lands. Private individuals and organizations, local governments, and American Indian tribes often initiate this process and prepare the necessary documentation. A professional review board in each state considers each property proposed for listing and makes a recommendation on its eligibility. National Historic Landmarks are a separate designation, but upon designation, NHLs are listed in the National Register of Historic Places if not already listed.

You can find more information in our [About Us](#) section. You can find more information on the [National Historic Landmarks program at their website](#).

What are the results of listing?

In addition to honorific recognition, listing in the National Register has the following results for historic properties:

- Consideration in planning for Federal, Federally licensed, and Federally assisted projects: -- Section 106 of

the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that Federal agencies allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register. The Advisory Council oversees and ensures the consideration of historic properties in the Federal Planning process.

- Eligibility for certain tax provisions -- Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings. This credit can be combined with a straight-line depreciation period of 27.5 years for residential property and 31.5 years for nonresidential property for the depreciable basis of the rehabilitated building reduced by the amount of the tax credit claimed. Federal tax deductions are also available for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial interests in historically important land areas or structures.
- Consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface mining permit where coal is located in accordance with the Surface Mining Control Act of 1977; and
- Qualification for Federal grants for historic preservation, when funds are available. Owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose provided that no Federal monies are involved.

You can find more information on the results of being listed on our [results page](#).

What are the restrictions, rules, regulations for historic property owners?

From the Federal perspective (the National Register of Historic Places is part of the National Park Service), a property owner can do whatever they want with their property as long as there are no Federal monies attached to the property. You can find this on our website at:

http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

However, before this occurs, you can, or the property owner should contact the State historic preservation office (SHPO.) The SHPO is the state agency that oversees historic preservation efforts in their state. There may be state or local preservation laws that they should be aware of before they undertake a project with a historic property.

You can find contact information for the SHPOs at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/shpolist.htm>

If Federal monies are attached to the property then any changes to the property have to allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (www.achp.gov) to comment on the project.

You can also read a copy of the National Register of Historic Places code of Federal regulations at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/regulations.htm>

You can also find general information for owners at:

http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

Can I modify, remodel, or renovate, my historic house?

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How do I apply for grant money or tax credits?

The National Register of Historic Places does not have a grant program ourselves. However, Heritage Preservation Services (a different division of the National Park Service, Cultural Resources Program) does have a tax credit program that may be of assistance to you. The website for the tax credit program is:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm>

Additionally, sometimes State historic preservation offices may have state run programs that could help. You can find contact information for the SHPOs at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/shpolist.htm>

How do I get a plaque?

Many sites listed in the National Register arrange for a commemorative plaque. Unfortunately the National Register of Historic Places does not issue plaques as a result of listing; rather we leave it up to the individual owners if they are interested in having one. If you do not have a local trophy/plaque store that you prefer, we know of several companies that advertise in Preservation Magazine that offer the type of plaques that you may be interested in. We recommend that you contact your [State historic preservation office](#) to see if they have a preferred plaque style or wording. **We are not endorsing, authorizing, recommending, or implying any connection to any one company over another, including any company not listed here.** We are merely aware that these companies sell plaques. Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are not required to have plaques.

- All-Craft Wellman Products, Inc.
4839 East 345th Street
Willoughby, OH 44094
www.all-craftwellman.com
Phone: 800-340-3899
Fax: 440-946-9648
- Artistic Bronze
13867 NORTHWEST 19TH AVENUE
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33054
800.330.PLAK (7525) 305.681.2876 FAX
<http://www.artisticbronze.com/>
- Eagle Sign & Design Inc.
901 E. Liberty St.
Louisville, KY 40204
888-561-0007
<http://www.eaglesign.com/>
- Equestrian Forge
222 S King St
Leesburg , VA 22075
703-777-2110
- Erie Landmark Company
637 Hempfield Hill Road
Columbia, PA 17512
1-800-874-7848
<http://www.erialandmark.com>
- Franklin Bronze Plaques
191 Howard Street Franklin, PA 16323
Toll Free: 866-405-6623
Ph: 814-346-7205 Fax: 814-346-7047
<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/>
- Healy Plaques
P.O. Box 4
60 New River Road
Manville , RI 02838
1-800-995-0981
- Impact Bronze Plaques
2215 South Wolf Road
Hillside, IL 60162
(800) 492-1201
Fax 708-492-0136
<http://www.impactsigns.com/cast-bronze-plaques>
- Metallic Arts
914 North Lake Road
Spokane Valley, Washington 99212
Ph: 1-800-541-3200
Fx: 1-509-483-1759

<http://www.metallicarts.com>

- Southern California Bronze Co.
2515 So. Broadway
Los Angeles, CO 90007
213-746-8046
www.socalbronze.com

(If your company sells these types of plaques,
contact us
and let us know.)

As far as phrasing is concerned, the National Register has no formal requirements or suggestions, but here are a few typical and accurate examples:

This property has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior.

or

(Historic name of your house) has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior.

You may want to indicate that the property is part of the historic district. In that case you may prefer:

This property is part of the Cool Spring Park Historic District, placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior.

or

The (historic name) House, part of the Cool Spring Park Historic District, has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior.

How do I get a copy of the file you have on a property?

We are currently digitizing our records and making them available online in our database at:

<http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do?searchtype=natreghome>

For properties that have not been digitized and put into the database you can request a copy by [e-mailing us](#).

Please be sure to include your name, mailing address, the historic name of the property, its location, including the State and County. If the property is in a historic district, please include the name of the district.

Depending upon our work schedules and how many requests we receive our turnaround time for copy requests is about 3 weeks.

How is a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places?

The way a property gets listed in the National Register of Historic Places is that the forms and documentation go to the State historic preservation office (SHPO) of the state where the property is located. The SHPO can take one of several options: reject the property, ask for more information, list the property just with the state, or send the forms to us for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Once we receive the forms, we conduct a similar review process.

You can read our page on Listing a Property at:

http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

You can find contact information for the SHPOs at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/shpolist.htm>

How can I update information for a property that is already listed?

In order to update information in our file on a historic property the new information first has to go to the SHPO, and then from them to us. This process helps to ensure that the State and the National Register of Historic Places have the same information. So, if you feel that the information in the file needs to be updated, you should contact the SHPO to see what needs to be done there.

You can find contact information for the SHPOs at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/shpolist.htm>

I am pretty sure that a property is listed, but I cannot find it in your database, why is that?

The property could be within a historic district. A historic district is: a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

Unfortunately, our database does not include every address within historic districts. If you know the name of a historic district that the property is in, we can look in the file and verify that it is a contributing resource in the district. You can also contact the State historic preservation office (SHPO) of the state where the property is

listed. The SHPO is the state run agency that oversees historic preservation efforts in the state. They should be able to tell you what district the property is in. The way a property gets listed in the National Register of Historic Places is that first all of the forms and paperwork go to the SHPO, then they decide if they want to send it to us at the National Register. So the SHPO is more local and more familiar with the properties, and may have information on the property if it is listed with the state, but not with us.

How do I contact you, what is your address?

You can contact us

- via e-mail
- Staff Contacts
- General Phone: 202-354-2211
- Phone to ask for information specifically on a listed property: 202-354-2262
- Mail -- If you mail something to us you can use:
Employee Name (or National Register of Historic Places Reference)
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C St., NW (2280)
Washington , DC 20240-0001
however, everything that goes through the C St. address will be irradiated (due to the anthrax scare shortly after 9/11), so if you are providing something that may be damaged (especially photographs), you can mail them via paid courier -- like Federal Express, UPS, etc. and use:
Employee Name (or National Register of Historic Places Reference)
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington , DC 20005

How old does a property have to be to qualify for listing?

Generally, properties eligible for listing in the National Register are at least 50 years old. Properties less than 50 years of age must be exceptionally important to be considered eligible for listing. We have a bulletin on nominating properties that are less than 50 years old. [Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years](#)

I want to know if a property is listed, how can I do that?

Please look at the NRIS, the National Register Information System, our database of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The NRIS is on our website at: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/research/> You can search by state and/or county and/or city. The NRIS is arranged by the historic name of the property. If you know the address of the property, but not the historic name, you will have to look at each listing in the county and/or city.

I am a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, what can you do for me?

Nothing that we wouldn't do for anyone else. The National Register of Historic Places is not the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We have worked together on various projects in the past, but we are completely separate organizations. We are a Federal agency, supported by your tax dollars, we do not have any membership fees, etc. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private nonprofit organization with more than 270,000 members. You can visit their homepage for more information at: <http://www.preservationnation.org>.

I want to use the photographs in your files, is it copyrighted?

Please see our page on [content and copyright](#).

What are the definitions of some of the terms and acronyms you use?

Bulletin 16A "How to Complete the National Register Registration Form" includes a [glossary of terms](#) that the National Register of Historic Places uses to evaluate historic properties.

What is the preferred method of citation for a National Register of Historic Places nomination file?

National Register of Historic Places, property name, town, county, state, reference number.
Example:

National Register of Historic Places, Lamesa Farm Workers Community Historic District, Los Ybanez, Dawson County, Texas, National Register #93000771.

What is the difference between a National Park, a National Monument, a National Memorial, a National Historical Park, etc?

The numerous designations within the National Park System sometime confuse visitors. The NPS has a [page that defines the many different designations](#) that exist.

Quicklinks

- [Search the National Register Database](#)
- [Find out what we listed this past week](#)
- [What's New / Features / Calendar of Events](#)



Did You Know? [Arna Wendell Bontemps House](#)

See how the Louisiana birthplace of *Crisis* writer and novelist Arna Wendell Bontemps inspired African-American literature about life in the South.



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