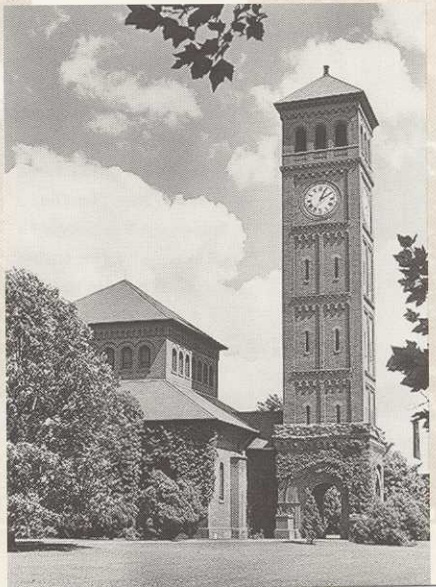
Cover:

Founded in 1868, the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia was among the earliest schools in the United States established to provide vocational and technical education for African Americans.

Photo courtesy Hampton Institute.

National Historic Landmarks

Illustrating the Heritage of the United States



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service
Cultural Resources

National Historic Landmarks make tangible the American experience. They are places where significant historical events occurred, where prominent Americans worked or lived, that represent those ideas that shaped the nation, that provide important information about our past, or that are outstanding examples of design or construction.

William Tipton's Store-post office-stable was once a focal point in the town of Tipton, New Mexico, a junction on the Santa Fe Trail where wagon trains organized before entering Indian Territory.

Photo courtesy New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office.

National Historic Landmarks guide us in comprehending important trends and patterns in American history. They form the common bonds that tie together the many groups that settled the country and provide anchors of stability in a fast-changing world, ensuring that the nation's heritage will be accessible to generations yet unborn.

While many historic places are important locally or on a state or regional level, a few have meaning for most Americans. Places that "possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States" are designated National Historic Landmarks. They illuminate our rich and complex national story that spans more than 10,000 years, from the arrival of the ancient hunters who crossed into Alaska from Asia to the exploration of outer space. The story is there to be told in Presidential homes, on stretches of arctic tundra, in our rich seafaring and maritime heritage, on battlefields, at pueblo ruins and earthen mounds, in the nation's industrial facilities, in historic towns and communities, and in our masterpieces of architecture and engineering.

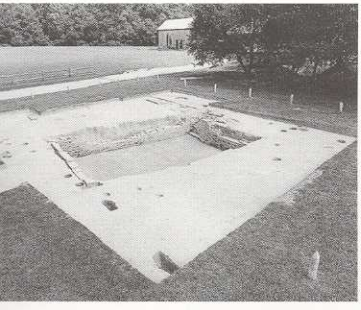
In 1935, the U.S. Congress charged the Department of the Interior with the responsibility for designating nationally significant historic sites, buildings, and objects and promoting their preservation for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States. The National Historic Landmarks program was established to identify and protect places possessing exceptional value in illustrating the nation's heritage. Only 3% of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are designated as National Historic Landmarks. Their preservation is an irreplaceable legacy to us and future generations.

Through the combined efforts of the **National Historic Landmarks Survey** and the **National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative**, the National Park Service administers the National Historic Landmarks program for the Secretary of the Interior. It is a cooperative endeavor of government agencies, professionals, and independent organizations sharing knowledge with the Service and working jointly to identify and preserve National Historic Landmarks.

National Historic Landmarks Survey

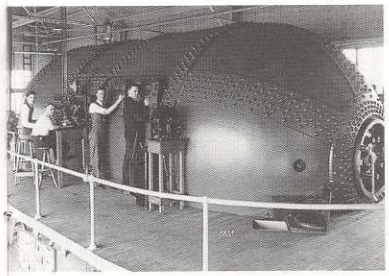
How Are National Historic Landmarks Designated?

National Historic Landmarks may be designated through broad organized initiatives called theme studies, which examine related places linked by a single subject or theme, or they may be identified individually. The National Park Service often conducts National Historic Landmark studies in partnership with federal, state, tribal, or local preservation officials; the academic community; independent scholars; and others knowledgeable about a particular subject. The National Park Service's National Historic Landmarks Survey staff prepares nominations, advises others on their preparation, and evaluates potential National Historic Landmark nominees for their ability to meet specific criteria. The National Park System Advisory Board considers completed nominations at meetings that are open to the public. Based upon the recommendations of the Board, the Secretary of the Interior designates National Historic Landmarks.



Archeological investigation at the Tolle-Tabbs House site in St. Mary's City Historic District, Maryland provided important information about the lives of Americans during the colonial period.

Photo courtesy St. Mary's City Commission.



The Variable Density Tunnel at the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia was vital in testing theories formulated by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, which later became the National Air and Space Administration.

Photo courtesy NASA.

From exquisite summer homes to this modest commercial block, the Bellevue Avenue Historic District in Newport, Rhode Island includes designs by some of America's most prominent architects of the 19th century.

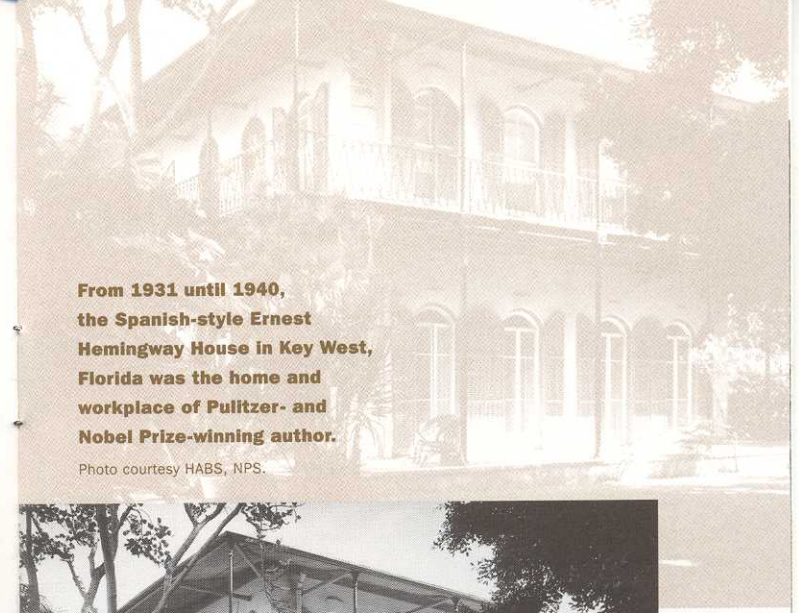
Photo courtesy HABS, NPS.

What Does National Historic Landmark Designation Mean?

- National Historic Landmark designation recognizes properties that are important to the entire nation.
- National Historic Landmarks are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Owners of National Historic Landmarks are free to manage their property as they choose, provided no federal license, permit, or funding is involved.
- Federal agencies whose projects affect a National Historic Landmark must give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.
- Owners of National Historic Landmarks may be able to obtain federal historic preservation funding, when funds are available. Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation and other provisions may apply.
- A bronze plaque bearing the name of the National Historic Landmark and attesting to its national significance is presented to the owner upon request.

The stately General Motors Building in Detroit, Michigan embodies the spirit of a company that profoundly affected the American way of life.

Photo courtesy American Association for State and Local History.



From 1931 until 1940, the Spanish-style Ernest Hemingway House in Key West, Florida was the home and workplace of Pulitzer- and Nobel Prize-winning author.

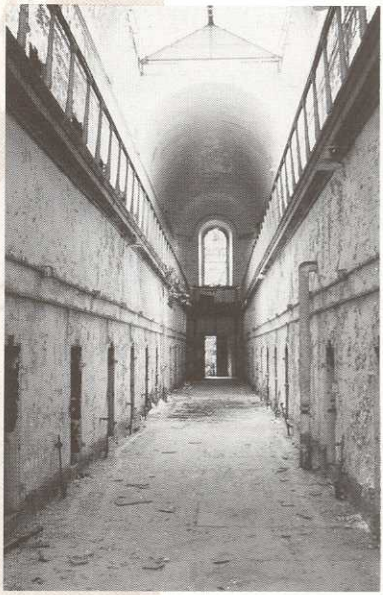
Photo courtesy HABS, NPS.

Most National Historic Landmarks are owned by private individuals or groups. Others are owned by local, state, tribal, or federal government agencies, or have mixed public-private ownership. Owners and public officials are given an opportunity to comment on National Historic Landmark nominations, and private owners of potential National Historic Landmarks are given the opportunity to concur in or object to their designation. National Historic Landmark designation offers advantages to owners who wish to preserve their properties. It aids decision making by government agencies, private organizations, and individuals because it is the primary federal means of assessing the national significance of historic properties. Information on National Historic Landmark designation is used for planning, public education, and interpretation.

National Historic Landmarks Assistance

What is the National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative?

Once designated, the National Park Service commits to assist in the preservation of these irreplaceable properties through the National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative. The Assistance Initiative promotes the preservation of National Historic Landmarks through technical assistance to their stewards—owners, managers, and friends groups—and education of the general public about the importance of National Historic Landmarks. The National Park Service works with partners such as other federal agencies, state governments, Indian tribes, local governments, colleges and universities, private organizations and individuals, and nonprofit organizations such as the National Park Foundation, the National Parks and Conservation Association, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to educate and assist the public in preserving its historic heritage.



The Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was built in the 1820s as a model prison to promote reform, rather than punishment. NPS worked with local groups and the city to interpret the property and pursue its preservation.

Photo courtesy Bill Bolger, NPS.

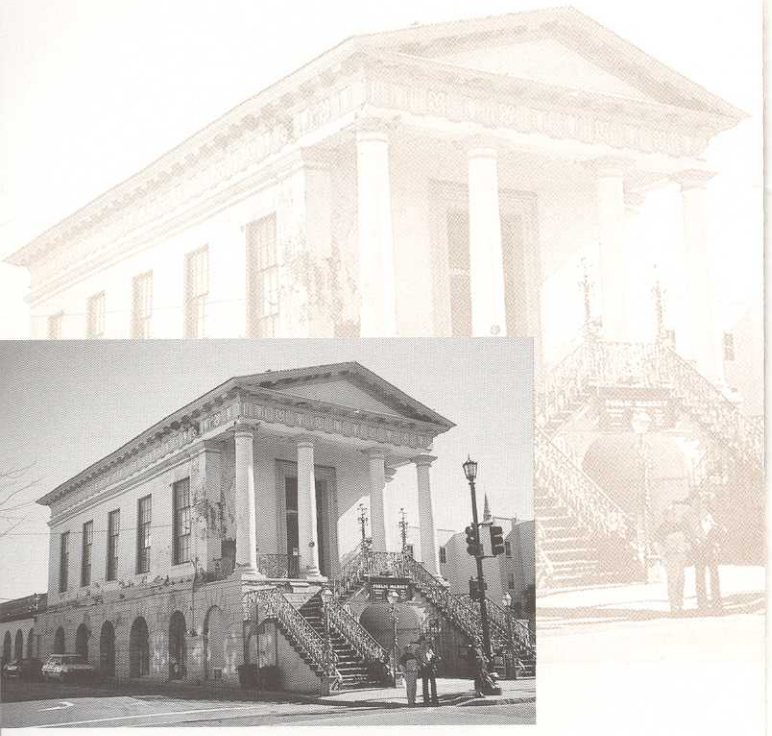
Its mission is to:

- Ensure the long-term preservation of National Historic Landmarks.
- Provide technical support and assistance to owners, managers, and friends groups of National Historic Landmarks.
- Build partnerships between the National Park Service and other federal agencies; state, tribal, and local governments; nonprofit organizations; and individuals to enhance the protection of these unique places.
- Educate the public about National Historic Landmarks to build support for their protection and that of the nation's heritage.
- Teach the stories inherent in these important resources.

The FIR in Seattle, Washington, is the only intact example of a classic Lighthouse Tender. NPS worked with owners of maritime resources in Puget Sound to develop preservation strategies.

Photo courtesy NPS.

National Historic Landmarks possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States.



Constructed in 1841, the Market Hall and Sheds in Charleston, South Carolina, represent one of a small number of 19th century market complexes extant in the United States. NPS provided a condition assessment report used by the city in its restoration of this property.

Photo courtesy Lee Nelson, NPS.

What Are Endangered Landmarks?

Unfortunately, at any moment, some 16% of designated National Historic Landmarks are at risk for destruction or loss. Some owners cannot afford to maintain their Landmarks. Others choose not to. The federal government has no power to make owners maintain their property, even if it is important to the heritage of all of us. Deterioration is the major threat to National Historic Landmarks. Other threats include demolition, natural disasters, commercial and residential development pressure, inappropriate alterations, and vandalism. Threats such as these destroy the historic character of National Historic Landmarks and their ability to commemorate and tell important stories.

The National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative continually monitors the condition of National Historic Landmarks and sends a periodic report to Congress and others who are interested in the future of these properties. Legislators and officials use the report in planning for the protection of National Historic Landmarks. Owners use the report in seeking funding for repairs and in developing coalitions to protect their properties. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the report, contact the National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative at the addresses listed below.

The ruins of the mission church at Quarai, Torrance County, New Mexico, are tangible evidence of the efforts of Spanish colonial officials to acculturate the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico during the 17th century. NPS stabilized the church ruins and interprets the site as part of the Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument.

Photo courtesy NPS.

How Can You Help?

Nothing can replace the experience of being in the actual historic settings where our national history was shaped. No replica can achieve the genuine connection historic places give us with our collective past. National Historic Landmarks are the authentic places where we can experience our history first hand. You help preserve National Historic Landmarks when you:

- Visit National Historic Landmarks open to the public that are located across the nation and discover the stories of these places.

- Become familiar with historic preservation issues and techniques.

- Teach young people the value of preserving historic resources as a tangible way to understand the history of the United States. Ask your local schools to do the same.

- Encourage your elected officials to support legislation that protects all significant historic properties, but especially National Historic Landmarks.

- Attend local planning meetings to ensure that decision makers acknowledge and protect National Historic Landmarks as important historic places and tourist sites.

- Join your local, statewide, and national historic preservation organizations, and become involved in the founding of a National Historic Landmarks "friends" group.

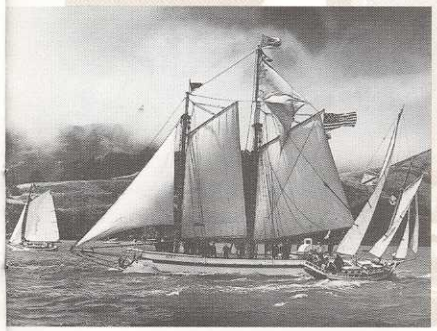
- Volunteer at National Historic Landmarks.

- Support historic preservation initiatives through newspaper editorials and at community meetings.

- Give to the National Historic Landmarks Assistance Fund and the National Historic Landmarks Survey Fund. Administered by the nonprofit National Park Foundation, these funds enable necessary work to be undertaken on endangered National Historic Landmarks and public education initiatives. Your donation to the National Park Foundation, on behalf of all National Historic Landmarks or those of your choice, will aid the National Park Service in preserving these valuable resources.

Donations may be made to:

National Historic Landmarks Assistance Fund
and the National Historic Landmarks Survey Fund
National Park Foundation, Suite 1102
1101 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036



The scow Schooner ALMA moored in San Francisco, California is exceptionally well-preserved, and the last remaining floating vessel of her type.

Photo courtesy National Maritime Museum.

National Historic Landmarks Program Contacts

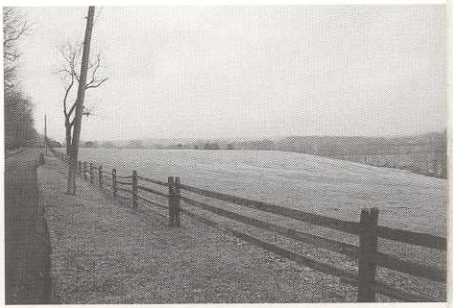
To find out more about the National Historic Landmarks program, visit the National Park Service's Cultural Resources Web Sites or contact one of the offices listed here.

http://www.cr.nps.gov
(for NPS Cultural Resources)

http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/
(for National Historic Landmarks Program)

The Brandywine Battlefield, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, was the site of General Howe's defeat of Washington's troops in 1777. NPS assisted with the protection of this battlefield through an American Battlefield Protection Program grant for educational programs and through planning assistance.

Photo courtesy NPS.



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Seattle, WA 98104-1060
(206) 220-4133
ID, WA, OR

Intermountain Support Office - Denver
National Park Service
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Denver, CO 80225-0287
(303) 969-2842
MT, WY, CO, UT

Intermountain Support Office - Santa Fe
National Park Service
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Santa Fe, NM 87504
(505) 988-6788
AZ, NM, TX, OK

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Pacific Great Basin Support Office
National Park Service
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Second and Chestnut Street
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CT, DE, DC, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV

Southeast Regional Office
National Park Service
Atlanta Federal Center
1924 Building
100 Alabama Street, S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 562-3171
AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR, SC, TN, VI

National Historic Landmarks Survey

National Register, History & Education

National Center for Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships

National Park Service
1849 C Street, N.W., Suite NC400
Washington, DC 20240
(202) 343-8174

National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative

Heritage Preservation Services

National Center for Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships

National Park Service
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