

## COVID-19 Response

Face masks are required on NPS-administered lands where physical distancing cannot be maintained and in all NPS buildings and facilities. Park operations vary based on local public health conditions. Before visiting, please check the [park website](#) to determine its operating status. Additional details are available at [www.nps.gov/coronavirus](http://www.nps.gov/coronavirus). Please [recreate responsibly](#).

## National Park Service

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# National Historic Landmarks

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### Frequently Asked Questions

The following are the most common questions that the general public, owners of potential National Historic Landmarks, and new owners of designated National Historic Landmarks ask us. For detailed, step-by-step information on the NHL nomination process, please visit our [Apply pages](#).

Please [contact an NHL Program regional office](#) or our [national office](#) if you have additional questions.

## General

### What are National Historic Landmarks?

National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be nationally significant in American history and culture. Many of the most renowned historic properties in the nation are Landmarks. Mount Vernon, Pearl Harbor, the Apollo Mission Control Center, Alcatraz, and Martin Luther King's Birthplace are Landmarks that illustrate important contributions to the nation's historical development.

### How are National Historic Landmarks selected?

Potential Landmarks may be identified through theme studies or special studies undertaken by the National Park Service; these studies provide a comparative analysis of properties associated with a specific area of American history, such as Labor or Women's History. The historic importance of these potential Landmarks is evaluated by the National Park Service and the National Park System Advisory Board twice yearly at meetings that are open to the public. The Advisory Board includes citizens who are national and community leaders in the conservation of natural, historic, and cultural areas. The Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior regarding potential National Historic Landmarks. Final decisions regarding National Historic Landmark designation are made by the Secretary of the Interior. In most cases, designation by the Secretary occurs six to eight weeks following the Advisory Board's recommendation. Designation may be delayed if questions regarding the significance, physical condition, or boundaries of a potential Landmark are raised by the Advisory Board or the Secretary of the Interior. Nominations prepared by other Federal agencies, State Historic Preservation Officers, and individuals are accepted for review and represent an increasing number of nominations reviewed each year.

## What criteria are used to select National Historic Landmarks?

National Historic Landmarks may be districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects. All Landmarks are nationally significant. Each Landmark demonstrates exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, technology, and culture. National Historic Landmarks possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. That is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represents, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or
2. That are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
3. That represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
4. That embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for the study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
5. That are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or

6. That have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree.

Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not eligible for designation. Such properties, however, may qualify if they fall within the following categories:

1. A religious property deriving its primary national significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
2. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is nationally significant primarily for its architectural merit, or for association with persons or events of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the consequential association; or
3. A site of a building or structure no longer standing but the person or event associated with it is of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the consequential association; or
4. A birthplace, grave, or burial if it is of a historical figure of transcendent national significance and no other appropriate site, building or structure directly associated with the productive life of that person exists; or
5. A cemetery that derives its primary national significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, or from an exceptionally distinctive design or from an exceptionally significant event; or
6. A reconstructed building or ensemble of buildings of extraordinary national significance when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other buildings or structures with the same association have survived; or
7. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own national historical significance; or
8. A property achieving national significance within the past 50 years if it is of extraordinary national importance.

## How are National Historic Landmarks different from other historic properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places?



Landmarks have been recognized by the Secretary of the Interior as possessing national significance. Nationally significant properties help us understand the history of the nation and illustrate the nationwide impact of events or persons associated with the property, its architectural type or style, or information potential. A nationally significant property is of exceptional value in representing or illustrating an important theme in the history of the nation. Properties listed in the National Register are primarily of state and local significance. With a state or locally significant property, its impact is restricted to a smaller geographic area. For example, many historic schools are listed in the National Register because of the historically important role they played in educating individuals in the community or state in which they are located. Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, is nationally significant because it was the site of the first major confrontation over implementation of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools. The city's resistance led to President Eisenhower's decision to send Federal troops to enforce desegregation at this school in 1957.

All National Historic Landmarks are included in the **National Register of Historic Places**, which is the official list of the nation's historic properties worthy of preservation. Landmarks constitute more than 2,500 of more than 90,000 entries in the National Register; the others are of state and local significance. The process for listing a property in the National Register is different from that for Landmark designation with different criteria and procedures used. Some properties are recommended as nationally significant when they are nominated to the National Register, but before they can be designated as National Historic Landmarks, they must be evaluated by the National Park Service's National Historic Landmark Survey, reviewed by the National Park System Advisory Board, and recommended to the Secretary of the Interior. Some properties listed in the National Register are subsequently identified by the Survey as nationally significant; others are identified through theme studies or special studies. Both the National Historic Landmark and the National Register Programs are administered by the National Park Service under the Secretary of the Interior.

## Designation of National Historic Landmarks

**Is there a period for comment on designation before a property is designated a National Historic Landmark?** ▼

**Yes.** The owners, highest elected local officials, State Historic Preservation Officers, and members of Congress representing the area where the potential Landmark is located are notified by the National Park Service of the opportunity to comment in writing to the National Park Service on the potential designation. These parties are provided 60 days to comment before the meeting of the **National Park System Advisory Board National Historic Landmarks Committee**. The Landmarks Committee reviews the nominations in detail and provides a report to the Advisory Board on those properties that meet the designation criteria. Written comments will be included in the documentation made available to the Landmarks Committee and

the Advisory Board. Interested parties may also attend the Landmarks Committee and Advisory Board meetings, and upon request may be given an opportunity to address the Committee or Board concerning a property's significance, integrity, and proposed boundaries. The regulations outline this aspect of the procedure in more detail; for more information refer to [36 CFR § 65.5 "Designation of National Historic Landmarks."](#)

## How will Landmark designation affect my ability to make changes to my property? ▼

Listing of private property as a National Historic Landmark or in the National Register does not prohibit under Federal law or regulations any actions which may otherwise be taken by the property owner with respect to the property. The National Park Service may recommend to owners various preservation actions but owners are not obligated to carry out these recommendations. Property owners are free to make whatever changes they wish if Federal funding, licensing, or permits are not involved. (Questions regarding Federal involvement are answered in the next section.) Federal laws that involve National Historic Landmarks are listed in the Federal regulations governing this program, specifically in [36 CFR § 65.2 "Effects of Designation."](#)

Owners should keep in mind that state laws or local ordinances may affect National Historic Landmarks if these legal mechanisms recognize and protect Landmarks, independent of Federal law.

## Can I prevent my property from being a Landmark? ▼

**Yes.** If a private owner (or the majority of private owners of a potential Landmark with multiple owners) objects to Landmark designation, the Secretary of the Interior cannot designate the property.

## Will I have to open my property to the public if it becomes a Landmark? ▼

**No.** There is no such requirement as a result of National Historic Landmark designation. The overwhelming majority of Landmarks are privately-owned properties. Some grant sources, however, may require that recipients of funding make their property available to the public under very restricted circumstances.

## Are there requirements that I maintain my property to NPS standards or restore it to its original or historic appearance? ▼

**No.** The National Park Service monitors the status of Landmarks, and will often contact owners and discuss preservation needs. While the NPS encourages owners to use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for

Historic Preservation Projects, owners are under no requirement to follow this guidance.

## Does becoming a National Historic Landmark mean the federal government will acquire my property?

**No.** Landmark designation implies no commitment on the part of the Federal government to acquire the property.

# Federal Involvement with National Historic Landmarks

## Is my property likely to be affected by federal laws and regulations?

Federal, state, and local government-owned properties as well as private schools, institutions, and non-profit organizations are often recipients of Federal funding, and, therefore, would be affected by Federal laws. Surface mining, especially surface coal mining, is subject to Federal laws. There is also Federal legislation that affords some degree of protection to archeological sites and the artifacts contained in them. Private property owners of commercial or residential buildings are less likely to be directly affected. However, Federally funded construction of highways, utility lines, or buildings may affect adjacent, privately-owned historic properties.

## How does federal involvement affect a Landmark?

Federal funding or licensing of activities that affect historic properties are regulated principally by [Section 106](#) and [Section 110\(f\)](#) of the National Historic Preservation Act. Other Federal effects are listed in [36 CFR § 65.2](#). Under Sections 106 and 110(f) of the Act, Federal agencies must "take into account" the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the [Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#) an opportunity to comment on the undertaking and its effects. Implementing regulations of the Advisory Council may be found in [36 CFR § 800 "Protection of Historic Properties,"](#) which establishes a process of consultation with the [State Historic Preservation Officer](#) and the Advisory Council leading, in most instances, to agreement on how the undertaking will proceed. Steps in the process include identification and evaluation of historic properties that may be affected, assessment of the effects of the Federal action, and resolution of any adverse effects that would occur. If a Federal activity will "directly and adversely affect" a Landmark, Section 110(f) of the Act also calls for Federal agencies to undertake "such planning and actions as may be necessary to minimize harm to such Landmark." As with Section 106, the agency must provide the Advisory Council with a reasonable opportunity to comment in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.

## Are there advantages to National Historic Landmark owners in the Section 106 Process?

**Yes.** Many property owners of Landmarks and National Register properties have found the [Section 106](#) process useful in ensuring that incompatible development projects or other actions funded, licensed, or initiated by Federal agencies are reviewed and modifications made when possible to avoid, minimize, or mitigate possible harm to historic properties. Examples of undertakings that would receive Section 106 review might include levee construction and other flood control measures that could destroy archeological sites; construction of a new four-lane, limited-access road through a rural historic district; and demolition, alteration, repair, and rehabilitation of deteriorated homes in a historic neighborhood funded by Community Development Block Grant monies to local governments.

## Can the Advisory Council prevent me from getting federal funding?

**No.** The [Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#) has no veto authority over Federal agencies. It is important to keep in mind that the law does not forbid specific actions, even those damaging to historic properties. The purpose of the law is to require Federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on the nation's historic properties. Once this has been accomplished, Federal agencies may choose to proceed with the undertaken as originally planned, modify it to mitigate damage to the property, or not undertake the project.

## How long does the Section 106 process take? Can it delay the receipt of federal funding?

The time varies depending on the historic property, the anticipated effect, the proposed undertaking, the complexity of consultation and negotiation, and the extent of public interest or controversy. The regulations do, however, provide specific time limits for both State Historic Preservation Officer and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation action in response to agency requests for comment.

## Will owner objection to Landmark status prevent the Section 106 procedures from taking place?

**No.** The law was specifically designed to extend [Section 106](#) protection to historic properties not designated as National Historic Landmarks or listed in the National Register. Section 106 requires the implementation of Advisory Council review for properties listed in or determined eligible for listing in the

National Register. Evaluations of historic significance are made for all properties potentially affected by federal undertakings in the Section 106 process. If the property meets National Register criteria for listing, a determination of eligibility is made and the property becomes subject to the Section 106 process.

A determination of eligibility for National Historic Landmark status may also be made by the Secretary of the Interior when an owner objects to Landmark designation. This action is equivalent to a determination of eligibility for listing in the National Register. In other words, federal undertakings will still be reviewed.

Some potential Landmarks are already listed in the National Register and thus an owner's objection to Landmark status will not halt implementation of Section 106. [Section 110\(f\)](#) of the law requires a higher level of attention for Landmarks adversely affected by federal undertakings; this Section, however, does not apply unless the property is designated a National Historic Landmark.

## Benefits to National Historic Landmark Designation

### Are there federal funds available for preserving or protecting National Historic Landmarks? ▼

**Yes.** Limited Federal grants through the Historic Preservation Fund are available; Landmark owners should check with their [State Historic Preservation Officer](#) or [National Historic Landmarks Program regional office](#) to find out about the availability of Federal and state funds. Often state and local governments have grant and loan programs available for historic preservation; these funds tend to be for small amounts. National Register listing is a condition for receiving grants and loans from many state and local governments as well as private sources. Some funding sources give National Historic Landmarks higher priority for funding than other National Register properties. There are also Federal income tax incentives available for donating easements and for rehabilitating income-generating historic buildings.

### What other benefits are there from National Historic Landmark status? ▼

If they wish, Landmark owners are provided with a bronze plaque to display at the Landmark. Plaques identify the name and Landmark status of the property and the date of designation. These are available at no cost to the owner.

The National Park Service provides technical preservation advice to owners of National Historic Landmarks. Questions regarding preservation issues are routinely answered by phone or letters, or during on-site visits by NPS staff. The following are other forms of assistance the NPS provides to owners:



- The National Park Service publishes and distributes information available to Landmark owners and administrators on a variety of preservation subjects. The NPS publications catalog is available on this page about [NPS History Publications](#).
- From time to time, the National Park Service contacts Landmark owners about the condition of their properties and may ask for permission to visit. The NPS is responsible by law for monitoring the condition of National Historic Landmarks. Information on the condition of Landmarks and potential threats to them is aggregated in an update published in the NHL database. This update is a valuable tool for stewards to use in fundraising and influencing policy affecting their Landmarks. The information is also used by the National Park Service to plan its assistance programs and helps in grant-making decisions.
- Each year, as funding permits, a limited number of Landmark buildings may be selected to receive in-depth site inspections funded and coordinated by the National Park Service regional offices. The purpose of these inspections is to analyze the specific condition of the Landmark, identify and prioritize recommended work treatments, and estimate the costs for carrying out this work. If funding permits, information derived from the in-depth inspection may be compiled in a building condition assessment report which may be made available to owners, preservation organizations, and interested public and private groups.

## Information about Specific National Historic Landmarks

### Whom do I contact about visitor information for an NHL?

The National Historic Landmarks Program **does not manage or own** National Historic Landmarks, so please direct your inquiries regarding visitor information to the site itself or to the local visitor's bureau. National Historic Landmarks are owned by both public and private entities, so not all NHLs are publicly accessible. Some NHLs are located within National Park Service units; please contact the park unit for visitor information.

### Where can I find a copy of the nomination for an NHL?

Most NHL nominations and images are available through links on our website. If the particular nomination you are looking for is not yet available on this site, you have two options: First, if the site has been designated recently, check our [Search page](#). If you cannot access the nomination through any of its instructions, please send an email to our archival staff ([e-mail us](#)) to request a paper copy of the

documentation. Please be sure to include your name, mailing address, the historic name of the property, and its location including the **state and county**. Please indicate that the property is a National Historic Landmark. If the property is located within a historic district, please include the name of the district. Typically, nomination requests are fulfilled within 3 weeks.

## I am looking for an NHL property but I cannot find its listing. Can you help? ▼

The Program maintains a comprehensive [list of all NHLs](#). If you cannot find a particular property there might be several reasons: the property is part of an historic district; the property is listed in the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and is not designated as a Landmark; the property is listed in a state or local register.

Unfortunately, our database does not include every address within a historic district. If you know the name of the historic district that the property is in, we can pull the file and verify whether it is a contributing resource in that district. You can also contact the [State Historic Preservation Office](#) where the property is listed. The SHPO is the state run agency that oversees historic preservation efforts within a state. They should be able to identify the district where the property is located.

## I am doing research on a particular NHL. Can you send me all the information you have available on this site? ▼

Most NHL nominations and images are available through our [NHL Data pages](#). Our Program provides professional research assistance to those who are developing or amending NHL nominations, individuals working on a dissertation, book or other professional publication, or in a professional capacity related to our Program's mission. We suggest you contact your local library or historical society for other research needs.

## What kinds of archival materials are stored in NHL Program files? ▼

The NHL Program's file for a particular NHL property only contains materials related to the designation process, which includes the following: the NHL nomination form and any updated documentation, photographs, a USGS map, and documentation related to the NHL designation process, and in some cases, Historic Structures Reports. The NHL Program is not the official repository for all materials related to a National Historic Landmark; our files only contain materials related to the NHL designation process. We do not own or manage NHLs (except for those few located in National Park units). For architectural drawings, please visit the [HABS/HAER/HALS collection](#) housed in the Library of Congress.

## My father served at a military base that is an NHL. How can I find information about his service there? ▼

There are many military bases that are NHLs; however, the NHL Program does not manage or maintain military service records. Direct your inquiries to the [National Archives and Records Administration](#), which is the official repository of these government records.

### I am doing research on my family history. Do you have any information on my relatives or where they might be buried?

**Probably not.** There might be information on a particular individual or family contained within an NHL nomination. Most NHL nominations and images are available online through our [NHL Data pages](#), however, the NHL Program does not manage records that can assist in genealogical research. There are numerous professional depositories that provide assistance in tracing your family history. These include the Library of Congress, the [National Archives and Records Administration](#), and your local library or historical society.

### I am interested in using an image available on your website or in an NHL file. What are the restrictions?

Please consult the National Register of Historic Places' [Copyright Page](#). The National Historic Landmarks Program follows the same guidelines.

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