

The National Register of Historic Places Today

Our National Register of Historic Places is recognizing what Americans value. Never has that heritage seemed more precious. This *CRM* is an update on how we collectively use the National Register to identify and preserve historic places and, equally as important, to learn from and incorporate them into the life of our communities. Some of our partners provide examples of the role the National Register plays in addressing continually evolving preservation challenges, and the National Register staff writes about what the National Park Service (NPS) is doing to help.

The statistics in the accompanying box are enlightening, but the articles better illustrate the impact and the forward thinking adaptability with which the National Register is wielded to serve a variety of purposes. Lawrence Oaks, the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, says that “All valuing decisions are made with the National Register as a departure point in assessing relative importance” and goes on to describe how Texas is encouraging “mom-and-pop” nominations and reaching out to Hispanics and African Americans. The increasing number of listings and determinations of eligibility associated with diverse cultural groups and the participation of American Indian tribes, evaluating the eligibility of the places they value, are healthy signs that the National Register is becoming more representative of the contributions of all our people, as it should be.

The number of rehabilitation projects taking advantage of federal preservation tax incentives and the Save America’s Treasures grants, available through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) over the last several years and other funding from the HPF, have provided modest but critically needed support to preserve registered historic places. In addition, many states have their own grant and tax incentives for National Register properties. In Texas, the National Register serves as the threshold for eligibility for a wide variety of preservation tools

and in Colorado, Mark Wolfe describes how it provided the model for the state register.

The National Register sets standards and develops guidelines and a variety of models and demonstration products that can be adapted and used throughout the nation. Dennis Gimmestad explains how the National Register Bulletin on

The National Register as a Tool for Recognition, Planning, Preservation, and Public Education

Listings—about 74,000 listings including some 1.2 million significant sites, buildings, structures, and objects.

American Indian tribes formally participating in the national preservation program—31.

Certified Local Governments (CLGs) participating in the program—1,297.

Federal projects reviewed by state historic preservation offices for their potential impacts on National Register listed or eligible properties—100,273.

Opinions on the eligibility of properties for the National Register provided annually by states to federal agencies under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act—currently about 57,000.

Properties rehabilitated using the federal preservation tax incentives—about 29,000 properties, representing a private investment of about \$25 billion.

Average number of visitors to the National Register’s web site—50,000 visitors per week or 2.6 million visitors a year.

(November 2001 statistics.)

rural historic landscapes demonstrated the viability of the rural historic district concept and spurred Minnesota to broaden its efforts to survey and nominate Minnesota's vast agricultural heritage to the National Register. Cari Goetcheus of the NPS' Park Cultural Landscapes Program points to several National Register Bulletins that have furthered the recognition of historic landscapes. Another article introduces the upcoming National Register Bulletin on American suburbs. Catherine LaVoie discusses how the Historic American Buildings Survey and Historic American Engineering Record use National Register documentation and contribute new documentation to register additional properties, forming a symbiotic relationship that should be expanded as they initiate the new Historic American Landscape Survey.

For some time, the National Register has been recommending the development of historic contexts and accepting multiple property nominations. The information is so useful that the NPS is digitizing the more than 1,700 cover forms in the National Register files to make them available to the public on our web site as the first step in digitizing the entire National Register collection. In a testimony to the utility of this approach, the Georgia Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and State Historic Preservation Office are partnering to prepare a context for evaluating Georgia's historic agricultural heritage. Kathryn Winthrop of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) says the development of historic contexts, inherent in the National Register nomination process, as well as the integrity assessments for

specific properties, provide significant organizing frameworks for BLM's management of cultural resources. The NPS' National Historic Landmarks Survey has adopted the multiple property format for theme studies such as those on the Underground Railroad and the Racial Desegregation of Public Education in the United States. In another example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has partnered with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) and the National Register to produce a context study on public housing. The multiple property model has also proven useful in increasing the visibility of archeological sites and for planning and interpretation.

The National Register can contribute to the economic vitality of communities. Donovan Rypkema's article explains how listing in the National Register can work as a catalyst to add value to properties and Cheryl Hargrove discusses heritage tourism as one of the fastest growing niches in the travel industry today and how the National Register plays a role. The *Discover Our Shared Heritage* travel itinerary series, sponsored by the National Register in cooperation with NCSHPO and communities and organizations throughout the nation, provides itineraries that showcase registered historic places to help travelers plan future trips.

Local governments and heritage areas and corridors, striving for community vitality and smart growth, are using the National Register. I was pleased to read what some mayors had to say in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Fall 2001, *Forum Journal*. In one article, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley describes how historic buildings are an essential part of the city's approach to economic development and how National Register listing and the federal tax incentives have been used as tools. He cites the city's initiative to get the core of the downtown, the Loop Retail Historic District, listed in the National Register as an economic development and marketing tool. We are supporting Chicago's efforts with a National Register travel itinerary and a Teaching with Historic Places lesson plan featuring registered historic properties in the Black Metropolis, an area that attests to the important role African Americans play in Chicago history. I was gratified when the mayor cited the historic buildings there as leading the revitalization underway in this commercial corri-

The Otis Terminal Warehouse, listed as part of the Cleveland Warehouse District, is a recently completed federal rehabilitation tax incentive project. Photo courtesy Sandwick Architects.



A National Historic Landmark, Orchard House in Concord, Massachusetts, was the home of Louisa May Alcott. Orchard House received a Save America's Treasures Grant, administered by NPS, for restoration and repair. Orchard House is also featured in the National Register Web travel itinerary, Places Where Women Made History. Photo courtesy Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association.

dor. In another article, Mayor Michael R. White explains how Cleveland has used registration to help fuel its comeback, supporting what Hunter Morrison of the City of Cleveland Planning Office said in our video, "I don't think without the designation of the National Register warehouse district we could have gotten the investor interest and the interest of public officials in taking a bunch of old buildings that people were knocking down for parking lots and turning them into a vibrant retail, residential, and office district."

In this issue of *CRM*, Florida's State Historic Preservation Officer, Janet Matthews, co-authors an article with Bob Jeffrey and Rick Smith of St. Petersburg's Urban Design and Historic Preservation Program. St. Petersburg is promoting National Register districts to build a bigger constituency for historic preservation while minimizing the political controversy surrounding local designation. The authors point out that often National Register nominations produce the only written history of a place. Brenda Barrett explores how the National Register can help heritage areas build a constituency for the past and lay a foundation for using heritage assets to create a viable new economy.

Professor Brown Morton of Mary Washington College writes that "From the moment the program was put in place the National Register became a national teaching tool." He and his colleagues incorporate what it has to teach into the curriculum to prepare their students for work in the preservation field. The National Register employs interns every year through the National Council for Preservation Education and the National Park Service Cultural Resources Diversity Internship Program and offers additional internships that train students who receive credit from a variety of schools. Tania Uriarte-Méndez, a law student from Puerto Rico and one of our diversity interns in summer 2001, worked with the National Register primarily with our Teaching with Historic Places program. She made a big contribution by translating into Spanish both the new National Register brochure and our lesson plan on the forts of old San Juan. The National Register's Teaching with



Historic Places lesson plan series aims at using registered historic places to enhance the instruction of traditional academic subjects, but its underlying goal is to educate young Americans to appreciate and be good stewards of our heritage. Educating all Americans about the value of historic places is fundamental to the purpose of the National Register.

All of us are using new technologies to improve our services and expand public outreach, and the National Register is no exception. We have been amazed at how the Internet has revolutionized our ability to reach the public and never dreamed our web site would receive some 50,000 visitors a week. Articles in this issue of *CRM* provide more information about the National Register online and the latest on the National Register Information System and the National Register Collection.

I want to thank all the authors who contributed to this issue and express our great appreciation to Ron Greenberg, who is stepping down as editor of *CRM* following publication of this issue. Because of Ron's long-time support and leadership, *CRM* has become a highly effective means of communication in historic preservation. I hope the articles in this issue reinforce your belief in the worth of a National Register of Historic Places to recognize our historic treasures and assist in preserving them to enhance the quality of life in our nation and for economic development, but most of all to help us understand and appreciate what it means to be an American.

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