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Information for
Parks, Federal Agencies,
Indian Tribes, States, Local
Governments and the
Private Sector



U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources

Using the National Register of Historic Places

Getting the Most for Our Money

Carol D. Shull

Are you getting your money's worth out of the National Register of Historic Places? In 1966, the framers of the National Historic Preservation Act may have envisioned the National Register as a list of places worthy of preservation, but the uses of the National Register go far beyond that today. In this special issue of *CRM*, a variety of authors tell us how the National Register is being used. In these days of reinventing government and getting more for less, we hope that readers will learn from these articles ways that we all can get the most from our investment in a national inventory of historic places.

The National Register should help us understand and appreciate our heritage and what specific places mean in American history. In his article on the role of the National Register in the "new" architectural history, Professor Bernard Herman tells us how the National Register is emerging as a vital, innovative, and integrated research approach that places cultural resources at the center of historical inquiry. Linda McClelland's article shares examples of multiple property listings that do just what Herman suggests.

(Shull—continued on page 3)



Communities across the country include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Historic courthouses, like the Washington County Courthouse in Blair, NE, represent the heritage of older communities. Photo by B. R. Long. Four

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Getting the Most for Our Money

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Diane Miller explores how documentation on National Register properties and the computerized National Register Information System (NRIS) database have grown into unique resources in their own right. Information from both sources is available to everyone, and can be used for policy analysis, project planning, community awareness, and research. In one example, Beth Savage explains how the NRIS was queried to identify over 800 listed properties associated with African Americans. Once the NRIS revealed the listings, registration documentation on each property was re-researched and the National Park Service's new Integrated Preservation Software used to prepare a nationwide educational guide to historic places demonstrating the contributions of African Americans to our history. The guide will be published this fall by the National Trust's Preservation Press. Are there ways the NRIS and National Register documentation can help you that you have not thought of before? The National Park Service is exploring ways to make both the database and the records more accessible to the public.

Most archeological properties are nominated under Criterion D for their information potential. Jan Townsend discusses how the National Park Service developed this criterion. She also describes the current status of the National Register archeological properties database, which illustrates the point that archeological properties are under-represented in the National Register. Unfortunately, most archeological resources have been identified as being eligible for the National Register for the purpose of planning federal projects, but relatively few have been formally listed. John H. Sprinkle, Jr., who is both an archeologist and a historian, gives four reasons to nominate archeological sites to the National Register and get them listed.

It is easy for the National Register staff in Washington to reel off statistics about how the National Register is used for recognition, planning, preservation and so on:

- Listings and Determinations of Eligibility—just over 62,000, including more than 900,000 individual sites, buildings, structures, and objects, and 9,000 Determinations of Eligibility.
- Nominations received each year—with shrinking dollars, now down to about 1,500.

- Federal projects reviewed by states for their potential impacts on National Register listed or eligible properties—more than 69,000 each year.
- 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—over 9,000.
- Properties rehabilitated using the preservation tax incentives—over 25,000 properties, representing a private investment of \$16.2 billion.

But what impact has the National Register really had in states, on federal agencies, and in communities?

Marcella Sherfy, the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer, contends that “by imposing no regulatory requirements and promising no magic money or cures,” the National Register “strikes exactly the balance it needs to serve and survive... in ‘don’t fence me in’ territory,” and that National Register listing opens the door for a variety of “benefits.” Marcella’s readers may find some new ideas they wish to adopt for providing and reaping the benefits of National Register listing.

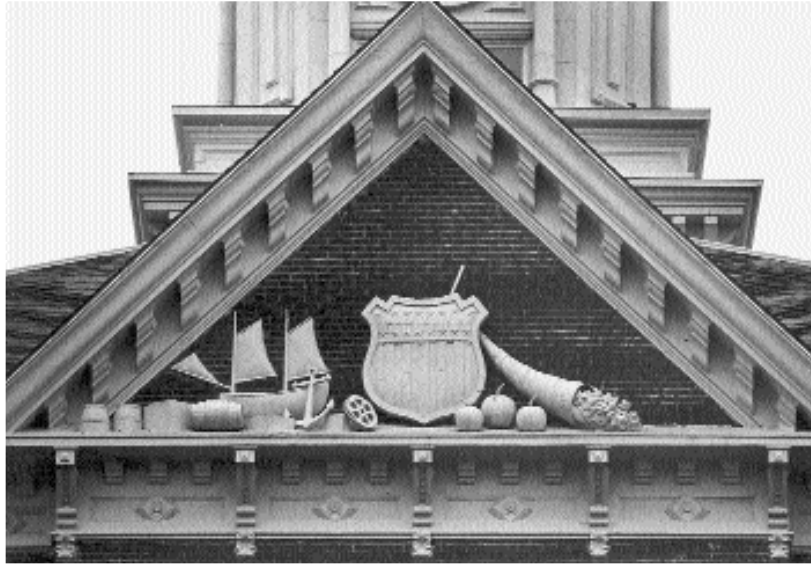
New York has among the most National Register listings of any state. David Gillespie describes how the National Register has

entered the lives of most New Yorkers. He shares a gratifying quote from New York’s new State Historic Preservation Officer, Joan Davidson, in which she begins by expressing her surprise that “The National Register of the 1990s turns out to be something quite different, indeed something vastly more consequential, than I had assumed.”

Richard Cloues’ article is a testimony to how the National Register has served as a focus and framework for African American preservation activities and helped preserve the heritage of Georgia’s African Americans—the state’s largest and historically most important minority group. Britta Bloomberg tells us how Minnesota has systematically completed county surveys to identify, evaluate, and nominate its historic properties to the National Register. Now the state is moving to fill in the gaps by registering properties that are better understood within a larger, statewide context, those that have recently “come of age,” and those that the historic preservation field has recently embraced to encompass the breadth of significant properties and cultural groups that reflect our heritage. Minnesota’s approach is an example to others.

Federal agencies are often reluctant to nominate properties under their ownership or control and have them publicly recognized by listing in the National Register

(Shull—continued on page 4)



Detail of north pediment, Washington County Courthouse, Blair, NE, illustrates the basis of the state's economy. Photo by B.J.B. Long, Four Mile Research.

(Shull—continued from page 3)

and too often see their responsibility for considering the effects of projects on eligible and listed properties as an administrative burden that hinders their mission. Edwin Bearss, the Chief Historian for the National Park Service and the Service's Federal Preservation Officer, tells how he changed from a skeptic to a supporter of National Register listing and documentation, and how he personally uses the National Register in his highly popular and widely recognized interpretation and public education activities.

In the last several years, some federal agencies have emphasized using historic resources on their lands for public education. The Payette National Forest in Idaho has made it a high priority to nominate eligible properties to the National Register. Lawrence Kingsbury, USFS archeologist and historian, discusses the multiple property listing for 19th-century Chinese occupations and activity areas in the Warren Mining District. The Payette National Forest's Recreation and Cultural Resource Management Heritage Program has interpreted these places in several interesting ways, and Chinese Americans from as far away as New York City and Hawaii have visited the China Mountain Terraced Gardens Interpretive Site.

Most listings in the National Register (some 60%) are of local significance, and many communities use National Register criteria and guidelines as the basis for local designation. Several articles explore the different ways communities have used the National Register to help them achieve one of the primary purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act—to preserve historic places as living parts of our communities. Recent Cornell University graduate Tanya Velt's thesis and her article for this issue contain her study of the positive effects of listing historic districts in the National Register in three Pennsylvania municipalities. Antoinette Lee thought of the idea for this special issue and with Tanya is the editor for it. The paper she presented at the 47th National Preservation Conference in St. Louis last fall describes three historic districts used to promote livable communities and as Toni says, "to frame their future in terms of their past."

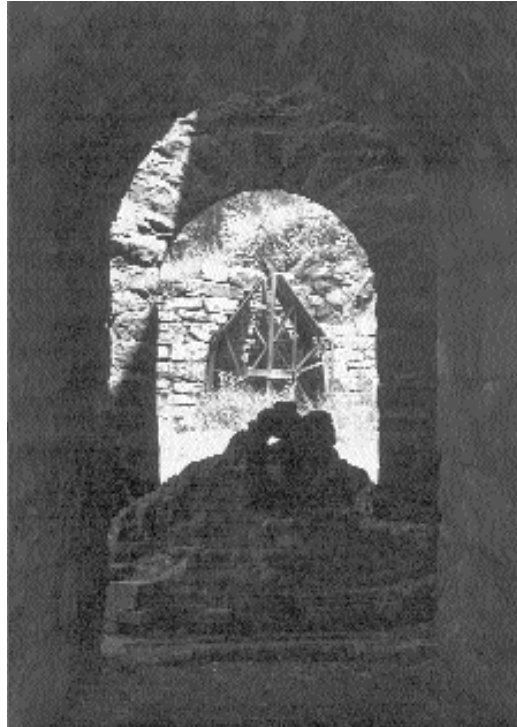
Real estate and economic development consultant Donovan Rypkema, who has been involved in a number of studies concerning the impact of historic preservation, investigates whether listing in the National Register increases a property's economic value. Donovan suggests that if typical buyers and sellers and real estate professionals do not understand the significance of National

Register listing (or even its existence) there is no way that an economic premium will be attached to such designation. We ought to take to heart his advice that the education of buyers and sellers generally, and the real estate community specifically, should be the responsibility of the preservation community.

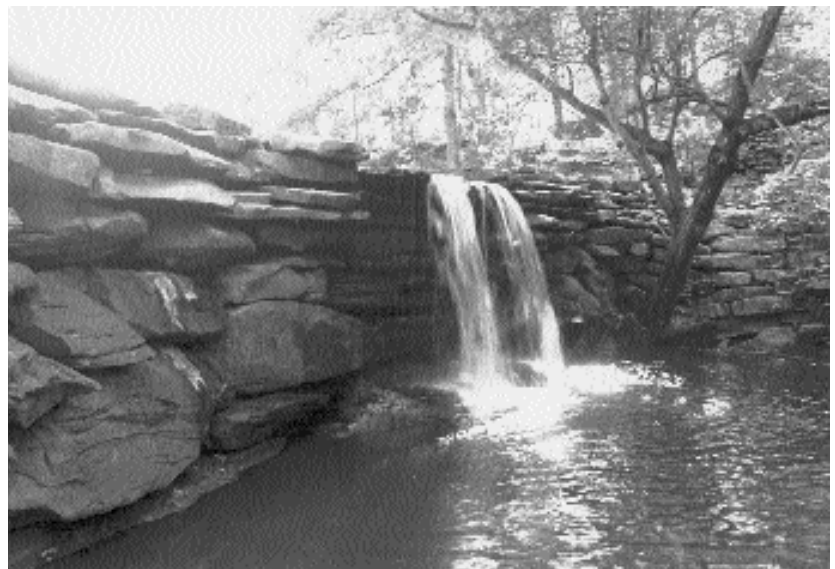
Education is key! If we do not use the National Register to educate Americans about the value of registered places, I question whether we will ever get the most from our investments in survey, registration, and protection. I notice that many of the travel book series now identify places as listed in the National Register. On the other hand, when I research the National Register for places to visit in my own travels, I find that we have information on far more registered places of interest to tourists than are included in published travel guides. The travel industry and tourists simply do not know that we have ready access to information about these places.

Some communities are missing excellent opportunities for using historic places to draw tourists, but not El Paso. Alfonzo Tellez tells us that the City of El Paso's Office of Heritage Tourism is determined to link the National Register listed missions and other properties with its Mission Trail and use the trail as

a springboard for heritage tourism. The National Park Service itself has embarked on a demonstration project aimed at educating the tourism industry and the traveling public about the National Register. National Register



The furnace stacks at Greenwood Furnace in Huntingdon County, PA, reflect the important role of iron plantations in the evolution of America's iron and steel industry. Operating from 1834 to 1904, Greenwood Furnace helped make Pennsylvania one of the nation's greatest producers of iron in the 19th century. Photo courtesy Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.



A naturalistic dam in Arkansas's Petit Jean State Park reflects the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Under the direction of the landscape architects, architects, and engineers of the National Park Service, the CCC developed recreational facilities from picnic shelters to manmade lakes in state parks across the United States during the 1930s. Photo by J. DeRose, courtesy Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

staffer Patty Sackett Chrisman describes how we are creating a series of regional travel itineraries linking national parks and other National Register listings, focusing on America's history of exploration and settlement, cultural diversity, and Spanish heritage. One of the itineraries is in Texas and should support El Paso's own heritage tourism efforts.

Teaching with Historic Places is an exciting new program which the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have developed as partners to bring historic places to our young people through the schools. Last year a whole issue of *CRM* was devoted to Teaching with Historic Places. Beth Boland will update you on the program and how you can participate. Besides creating instruction materials using National Register listings from National Parks to locally-significant properties, one of the program's main objectives is to teach preservation advocates and educators how to work together to use historic places in teaching, including professors who train college students to become classroom teachers.

The National Register already is being used in colleges and universities throughout the United States, primarily to prepare students to work in historic preservation professionally. Michael Tomlan, Chair of the National Council for Preservation Education and Director of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation Planning at Cornell University, writes about how the Register lies at the heart of the curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate levels. He illustrates how application of the approaches and methodologies in the National Register teach students to identify and evaluate historic properties, and how this practical knowledge helps students in the preservation field.

Some colleges and universities carry out surveys and prepare National Register nominations as active partners with State Historic Preservation Offices. Such is the case with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering at the University of Delaware whose director, David Ames, describes how the National Register is used in one of his own courses. Not only can colleges and universities conduct surveys and prepare National Register nominations that the states cannot afford to do, but these practical applications better prepare students for professional preservation work. In another example of the National Register's partnerships with colleges and universities, David Ames is now writing a National Register Bulletin on identifying and registering American suburbs, that grows out of his own research in Delaware.

Many individuals have spent some time working at the National Register before going on to other jobs in preservation. Now under Michael Tomlan's leadership, The National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) and the National Park Service have a cooperative agreement to hire graduate students as summer interns. The contributions of two of the National Register's summer interns through NCPE, Tanya Velt's article and Jennifer A. Meisner's bibliography of readings on the National Register in this issue, are examples of how the preservation community can achieve more through partnerships with colleges and universities.

The last article in this issue is by Professor Paul Risk. Last year I participated in a conference at which Professor Risk gave an excellent paper on why and how

we should interpret historic places. After hearing him speak, I came back convinced that we should prepare a *National Register Bulletin* on interpreting properties on the National Register, a project we are now beginning in cooperation with the National Park Service's Division of Interpretation. Professor Risk's article should whet our appetite for information on how we can use National Register listings and the information about them to educate Americans about our heritage.

The National Park Service maintains and expands the National Register. We settle disputes and hear appeals, and we set, publish, and distribute standards and guidelines in our *National Register Bulletin* publication series and provide training and technical assistance. We try to make the National Register accessible to the public by answering inquiries, querying the NRIS, copying registration documentation, and preparing such publications as the National Register cumulative list, the new book on African American historic places, regional travel itineraries, and so on. With the National Trust, we have embarked on Teaching with Historic Places. But we cannot measure the full impact of the National Register.



The U.S. Post Office in Homer, NY, was constructed as a public works project in 1937 and 1938. It is one of 155 post offices listed in the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property group, U.S. Post Offices in New York State, 1858-1943. Photo by Peter D. Shaver, courtesy New York State Office, Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

These articles about its uses are as instructive to us as we hope they are to you. In reading them, some people may think that we are trying to make the National Register more than it is, but we do not want it to be less than it can be. After reading this *CRM*, we challenge you to use the National Register in new ways to get the most for your money!

Carol D. Shull is Chief of Registration, National Register of Historic Places, Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service.