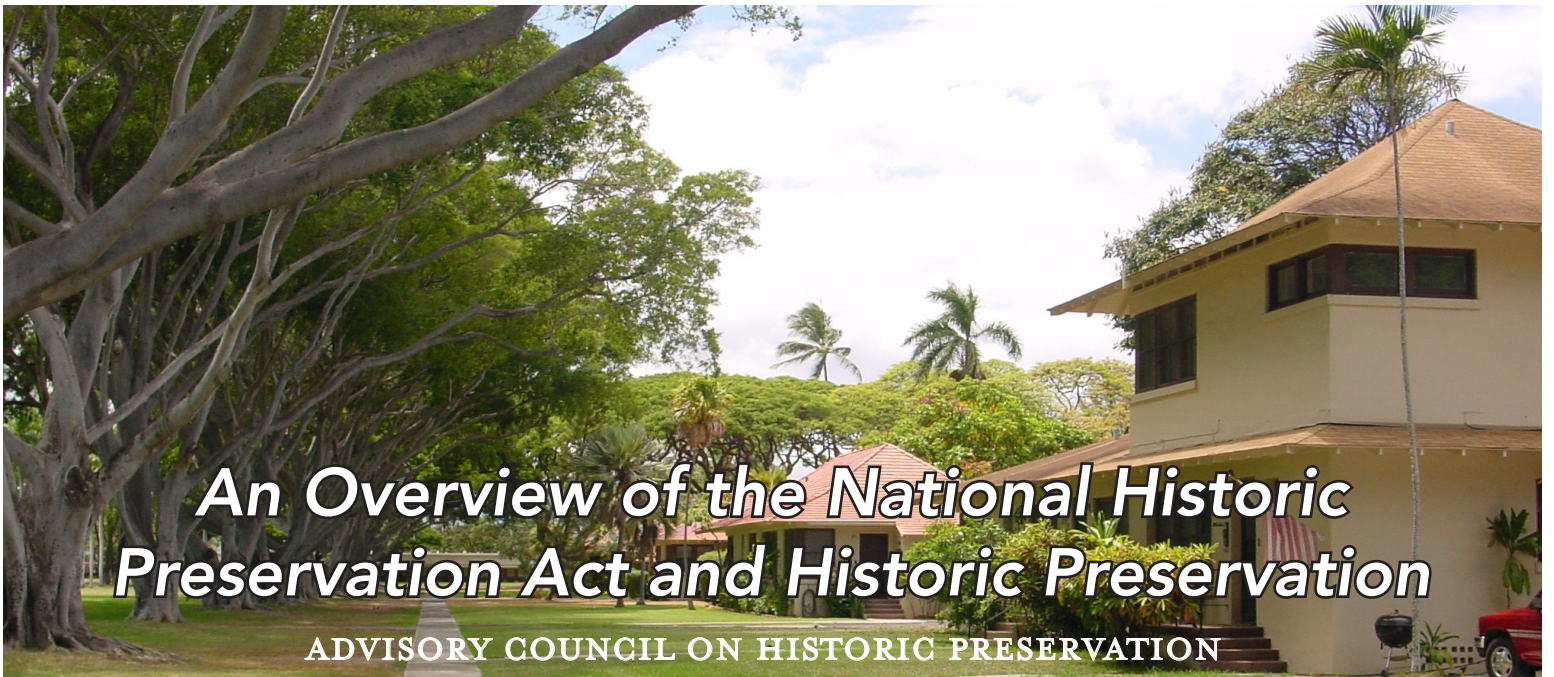




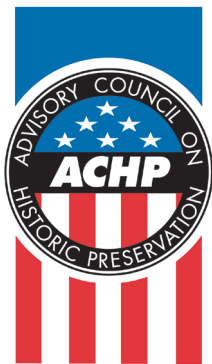
# PRESERVING AMERICA'S HERITAGE



*An Overview of the National Historic  
Preservation Act and Historic Preservation*

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION





*Preserving America's Heritage*



*Explore and Enjoy Our Heritage*

An independent federal agency, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of our nation's historic resources and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. It also provides a forum for influencing federal activities, programs, and policies that affect historic properties. In addition, the ACHP has a key role in carrying out the Administration's Preserve America initiative.

John L. Nau, III, of Houston, Texas, is chairman of the 23-member council, which is served by a professional staff with offices in Washington, D.C. For more information about the ACHP, contact:

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 803  
Washington, D.C. 20004  
Phone: 202-606-8503

Web sites: [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov) and [www.preserveamerica.gov](http://www.preserveamerica.gov)

Cover, clockwise from top left: Bussman Farm on the Mark Twain National Forest, Missouri; Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia; Dulles International Airport, Virginia; Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii; Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

## TOWARD PRESERVATION

# The National Preservation Movement and Origin of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

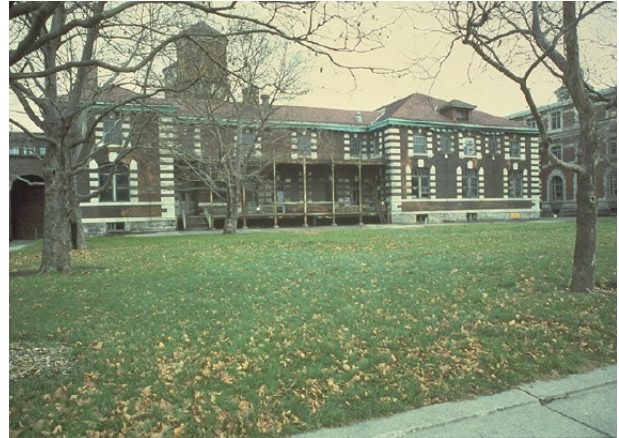
In the 1950s, a frenzy of modernization and a growing post-World War II population and economy were leading to the wholesale destruction of historic places in the United States. Places like Savannah, Georgia, with a unique city plan dating to the 18th century containing hundreds of historic structures, were at risk from efforts to revitalize older communities or a disregard for how new construction would affect existing places.

Modernization threatened to destroy what was best and most worth keeping of the past. The federal government's sponsorship of highway projects through city centers and removal of decaying urban areas in the name of progress did not adequately consider the full spectrum of local concerns and interests.

While the United States has long enjoyed a preservation ethic (for example, creating Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, in the 1870s), cities nationwide began realizing in the 1960s that perhaps more was being sacrificed to progress than their communities and the nation could afford to lose.

It was in this atmosphere that local people began to band together to retain the special character that made their homes and their environment special and unique. This grassroots effort was championed by the United States Conference of Mayors with significant assistance from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. These groups urged federal and state governments to consider the importance of historic places before they were destroyed. Indeed, in many cases federal construction and renewal projects had resulted in the destruction of places greatly valued by local citizens.

A major result was the report "With Heritage So Rich," created by the Special Committee on Historic Preservation of the United States Conference of Mayors. Lady Bird Johnson, then First Lady of the



Ellis Island, New York Harbor

United States, provided the foreword to that report. She described how the relentless pressure of growth had led to the destruction of almost half of the 12,000 structures listed on the national Historic American Buildings Survey, and she urged action for change.

As a result of this concern, the U.S. Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), signed into law by President Lyndon Baines Johnson on October 15, 1966. NHPA created the national preservation structure that has saved untold thousands of places that make our communities richer economically, culturally, and aesthetically. Clearly, sustainable historic preservation, more than a cost to society for maintaining the past, is instead a wise investment in its future.

On March 3, 2003, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13287, Preserve America, which aims to make the NHPA even more effective in the future than over the past 40 years. Mrs. Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States, is the Honorary Chair of Preserve America.

In this publication, following the motto of Preserve America, "Explore and Enjoy Our Heritage," you will learn why historic preservation is so important to your community and your country.

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

# Register is Official List of Preservation Sites

The National Register of Historic Places encourages citizens, public agencies, and private organizations to recognize and use the places of our past to create livable and viable communities for the future. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) has become the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archaeological resources, the National Register is administered by the National Park Service



Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, New York

under the Secretary of the Interior. Properties listed include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture including the following:

- All historic areas in the National Park System;
- National Historic Landmarks that have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior for their significance to all Americans; and
- Properties significant to the nation, state, or community, nominated by State Historic Preservation Offices, federal agencies, and tribal preservation offices.

America's historic places embody our unique spirit, character, and identity. Representing important historical trends and events; reflecting the lives of significant persons; illustrating distinctive architectural, engineering, and artistic design; and imparting information about America's past, historic

places tell compelling stories of the nation, as well as states and communities throughout the country. The National Register of Historic Places helps preserve these significant historic places by recognizing this irreplaceable heritage, fostering a national preservation ethic, promoting a greater appreciation of America's heritage, and increasing and broadening the public's understanding of historic places.

Listing properties in the National Register often changes the way communities perceive their historic places and strengthens the efforts by private citizens and public officials to preserve these resources. The National Register recognizes properties as diverse as a dugout shelter of an Oklahoma pioneer settler, the Vanderbilt Mansion in New York, and a 12,000-year-old prehistoric site, helping many to appreciate the richness and variety of the nation's heritage.

One common question property owners have about the National Register is, "Will there be restrictions on my property after listing?" Owners of private property listed in the National Register have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even to maintain them. Owners can do anything they wish with their property provided no federal license, permit, or funding is involved. However, local historical commissions, design review committees, or special zoning ordinances established by state legislation or local ordinances, may link National Register listing to separate standards or restrictions. A State Historic Preservation Officer or local government official can provide additional information about how National Register listing may relate to state or local requirements.

For private owners, federal funding for historic buildings usually comes as tax credits for rehabilitation of historic properties for income-generating projects. Owners of National Register properties who choose to participate in the preservation tax incentive program must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and receive approval by the National Park Service of the rehabilitation project in order to receive the federal tax credit.

**NHPA**

## National Historic Preservation Act Creates Framework for Local and National Efforts

In response to the destruction of older buildings and neighborhoods in the immediate post-World War II years, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) signaled America's commitment to preserving its heritage. The NHPA established the framework that focused local, state, and national efforts on a common goal of preserving the historic fabric of our nation.

The Act has many components, but the major features are that the NHPA:

- Conceived the national historic preservation partnership involving federal, tribal, state, and local governments along with the private sector. This structure today includes State Historic Preservation Officers (one in every state and U.S. territory), Indian tribal and Native Hawaiian organizations, and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.
- Fostered the system by which federal agencies

survey and identify districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture, and use this information to plan projects so that, where possible, historic places are protected.

- Established the National Register of Historic Places that provides federal recognition to properties of local and state, as well as national, significance.
- Created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation – that advises the President and Congress on historic preservation matters and works with federal agencies to address historic resources in the fulfillment of their missions.
- Authorized matching grants to states, Certified Local Governments, and Indian tribes for historic preservation surveys, plans, and projects.

## Major Organizations in Historic Preservation

### **Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**

An independent federal agency, the ACHP promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of our nation's historic resources and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. It provides a forum for influencing federal activities, programs, and policies that affect historic properties. In addition, the ACHP has a key role in carrying out the Administration's Preserve America initiative.

[www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)

### **National Park Service**

The NPS is a bureau within the Department of the Interior. The NPS preserves the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The NPS cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resources conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

### **State Historic Preservation Officers**

Each state and territory has a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) who administers the national historic

preservation program at the state level. They locate and record historic resources; nominate significant historic resources to the National Register; foster historic preservation programs at the local government level; assist in creating preservation ordinances; provide funds for preservation activities; review federal historic preservation tax incentive projects; provide technical assistance; and review federal projects for their impact on historic properties. [www.ncshpo.org](http://www.ncshpo.org)

### **Tribal Historic Preservation Officers**

Federally recognized Indian tribes may assume responsibilities for the preservation of significant historic properties on tribal lands and have generally parallel responsibilities to the SHPOs.

[www.nathpo.org](http://www.nathpo.org)

### **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

Created by Congress in 1949, the National Trust is a private, non-profit organization that provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize our communities. Its 270,000 members are part of a movement saving historic properties nationally. [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)



## BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

# The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

The National Historic Preservation Act and the national preservation structure it created are not designed to prevent change. They were created to ensure the benefits of historic preservation are available to local communities, states, and the nation. Congress created them in response to a grassroots aversion to the unreasonable destruction of important places.

The preamble to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 explains its purpose as follows:

### The Congress finds and declares that:

- The spirit and direction of the nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage.
- The historical and cultural foundations of the nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.
- Historic properties significant to the nation's heritage are being lost or substantially altered, often inadvertently, with increasing frequency;
- The preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans.
- In the face of ever-increasing extensions of urban centers, highways, and residential, commercial, and industrial developments, the present governmental and non-governmental historic preservation programs and activities are inadequate to ensure future generations a genuine opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of our nation.
- The increased knowledge of our historic resources, the establishment of better means of identifying and administering them, and the encouragement of their preservation will improve the planning and execution of federal and federally assisted projects and will assist economic growth and development.
- Although the major burdens of historic preservation have been borne and major efforts initiated by private agencies and individuals, and both should



Independence Hall, Philadelphia

continue to play a vital role, it is nevertheless necessary and appropriate for the federal government to accelerate its historic preservation programs and activities, to give maximum encouragement to agencies and individuals undertaking preservation by private means, and to assist state and local governments and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States to expand and accelerate their historic preservation programs and activities.

How remarkably different, and how much culturally poorer, the United States of America would be if it lost such iconic places as Mount Vernon, Independence Park in Philadelphia, and Vicksburg National Battlefield in Mississippi. Such places hold obvious significance where America's legacies are held in trust for present and future generations. But less famous sites also are of vast importance to local communities and tell wonderful human stories of our nation's history. Preservation does not mean locking away or preventing use of heritage resources; rather it encourages the sustainable appropriate use of cultural and heritage assets.

## BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Capitalizing on Historic Preservation

#### *Heritage tourism boosts local economies*

Many people, fascinated by the sites where American history occurred, are eager to experience these places themselves. International visitors or American citizens who travel to experience authentic historic places and learn directly from them are called "heritage tourists." Spending billions of dollars every year, they are among the fastest-growing variety of traveler. Their travels provide hundreds of millions of tax dollars, regenerating interest in historic districts and areas by locals as well.

#### *It's often cheaper and better to rehabilitate rather than to raze and replace*

Historic preservation can be less expensive than new construction. It can be cost-effective to rehabilitate structures for new or contemporary uses than to tear them down and build new structures. Further, investing in rehabilitation of older urban areas tends to revitalize these areas, making them popular for residences and businesses while keeping existing jobs and creating new ones.

When population declines in urban areas, tax revenues fall and businesses relocate outside the cities. Areas become blighted, falling into disuse and disrepair. People use more energy building new houses

and businesses and commuting to their workplaces when they relocate outside established communities. Hundreds of cities across the nation have encouraged revitalization through actions such as converting old factories or manufacturing facilities into apartments and condominiums, restaurants and other businesses, creating vibrant, interesting, and beautiful areas for people to live and work.

#### *Historic structures tell local and national story*

Of course, there are less tangible but perhaps even more important reasons to preserve unique old structures and historic spaces. They often offer a more human scale than many contemporary structures. The way they were designed and how they were constructed tell us much about the cultures that created them, and the traditions and events from which our nation grew. Places of heritage provide a link to our history and make a community more aesthetically and intellectually interesting.

Historic preservation allows people today to understand their origins and connects them with the continuum of history. By standing on or in the places where history took place, one can forge a personal connection with a community's heritage.



Downtown St. Louis, Missouri, has experienced a successful revitalization effort.

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## BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Dollars and Sense: The Economic Side of Preservation

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) has revitalized more than historic neighborhoods in its 40-plus years of existence. By encouraging a multitude of partnerships between state and federal agencies, private business and citizens, the NHPA has resulted in a far-reaching bang for its buck:

- More than \$19 billion from the private sector invested in neglected historic properties through federal tax credits
- More than \$8.6 billion from the private sector invested in 1,400 urban and village neighborhoods through the National Main Street Program (a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation)
- 161,000 new jobs through the National Main Street Program
- 43,800 new businesses through the National Main Street Program
- 48,800 rehabilitated historic structures
- The establishment of more than 2,500 historic districts
- Increase in heritage tourism
- Increase in property values
- Lessening of crime due to revitalization of previously decaying neighborhoods

*Source: Witness Statement to the Congressional Committee on Resources, Patricia H. Gay, Executive Director of the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans*

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## CASE STUDY

### General Grant Makes Key Civil War Decision at Dillon's Plantation

On May 12, 1863, Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman were headquartered at Dillon's Plantation near Raymond, Mississippi. They were maneuvering their Union military forces to capture Vicksburg, seeking to secure the vital Mississippi River corridor, cut the Confederate States of America in two, and deny it the economic and military use of the river. A sharp skirmish was fought in the area of Dillon's Plantation that day while the Battle of Raymond raged nearby, as Confederate forces fought desperately to blunt the Union drive.

That evening, receiving news of the favorable outcome of the Battle of Raymond, the two generals conferred on how the campaign was unfolding. Grant decided to change the route of the Union troops' advance, electing to move decisively against Jackson, the capital of Mississippi, before turning on Vicksburg as he had originally planned. This brilliant and daring decision resulted in the destruction

of railroads and war materials in Jackson, forcing the retreat of a sizeable Confederate army, thereby preventing it from joining ranks with the defenders of Vicksburg. These actions assured Union success in the Vicksburg campaign, contributing directly to the outcome of the Civil War and reunification of the nation.

The story of this decision was largely unknown but recently has been resurrected, largely because Dillon's Plantation suddenly became available to the public through actions taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA). This is a historic preservation story that shows how the process works to save special places of American heritage.

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, federal agencies and offices are required to review historic resources when considering the



## CASE STUDY

effects of their actions. On December 26, 2000, the FSA foreclosed on a 470-acre farm in Hinds County, Mississippi. Fulfilling the required review of the property before placing it on the market to sell, the FSA contacted the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The SHPO notified the FSA that the property was associated with an important Civil War action and was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

This coincided with a congressional authorization to the National Park Service in November 2000 of a study on how to better preserve Civil War battlefields along the Vicksburg Campaign Trail, considered of national significance to the history of the United States. The Vicksburg National Military Park investigated the site of Dillon's Plantation and reported that since the area today appears much as it did in 1863, "preservation of the site is crucial to the establishment of the Vicksburg Campaign Trail."

As a result, on January 9, 2003, the FSA transferred the property to the Natchez Trace Parkway, part of

the National Park Service. The property will now be surveyed and researched by archaeologists and other experts. Educational exhibits and markers will be prepared to interpret the events surrounding the decision that played a part in ending the Civil War – and preserving the United States of America.

Vicksburg — [www.nps.gov/vick/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/vick/index.htm)



Cannons mark the site of the Civil War Battle of Raymond, Mississippi.

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**CASE STUDY**

## African Burial Ground Changes Historical Perspective

In May 1991, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), a federal agency that among other essential activities provides office space and buildings for federal agencies to occupy, made a startling discovery.

GSA was planning to build a new federal building on lower Broadway in New York City. Because the site was located in an older part of Manhattan considered historic, GSA was required to do an archaeological investigation on the site before constructing the new building. (Federal agencies are required by law to do so to be sure their construction work does not destroy historic artifacts or resources below the ground.) Just as the archaeological investigation was about to be completed, the archaeologists discovered skeletons and other remains from human burials. The building site was located on a graveyard! The graveyard was buried deep beneath layers of earth and later development, and had been hidden from view for centuries.

The present is often literally built on the past, so finding human remains in an urban area was not especially shocking. But this particular cemetery would turn up not only the forgotten resting places of perhaps 20,000 people, but also uproot some popular contemporary misconceptions of American history.

With the discovery, work stopped temporarily on the new federal building, because under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) federal agencies have to consider the impact their activities may have on historic resources, even if they were unknown when work began. Other laws and regulations deal with the importance of proper, respectful treatment of human remains. It is also essential to inform and include other people, groups, levels of government and organizations that might have a legitimate interest in the historic resources involved in such cases.

Once that process began, the story began to emerge. During the Colonial period in New York, first under the Dutch and later under the English

and finally extending into the era of the early years of the United States of America, slavery was widespread there and throughout the Americas. Many people mistakenly believe that this practice was largely confined to a specific region of the United States. In fact, the practice was prevalent from the time of the first Spanish settlers. Including all of the Western Hemisphere during the centuries before the practice was outlawed, it is believed that close to 10 million people were forcibly removed from Africa, and those who survived the voyage to the New World were made to work for others and live in bondage without what today would be considered the most basic of human rights. For purposes of comparison, consider that in 2006, only eight of the 50 states had total populations that exceeded 10 million people.

As the Revolutionary War era began, New York contained the second-largest population of enslaved Africans in the North American colonies. Only South Carolina had more. And there was a growing population of free Africans. A New York census of 1746 recorded 2,444 persons as black – or about 20 percent of the population.

The African Burial Ground, which it came to be known, reclaimed historic facts that were largely forgotten or unknown because there had been little physical evidence reminding current generations about past practices.

While work on the federal building prompted the discovery of the resting place of more than 400 men, women, and children, it was quickly clear that the cemetery once covered a far greater area that was largely built over by earlier development. Evidence suggests as many as 20,000 persons had been interred by 1794 in what was then known as the “Negros Burial Ground.”

Study of the bones yielded information on health and nutrition, diet, gender, and age at death. The study demonstrated that many of those interred in the African Burial Ground had lived harsh and often



African Burial Ground reinterment, New York City

short lives.

Nine percent of the burials were children under the age of two, while another 32 percent were below the age of puberty. This indicates the death rate among African children in Colonial New York was high. Developmental defects in teeth and bones indicated a high rate of malnutrition and recurrent illness.

Some teeth were found to have been filed, which was a practice among adolescent children in many parts of West and Central Africa. Arm, leg, and shoulder bones of the adult men showed evidence of muscles that had been torn from the bones in life, indicating they had endured labor beyond the limits of physical endurance.

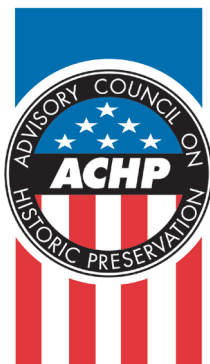
The caskets, coffins, and articles buried with these more than 400 people also told a lot of stories to today's researchers. Interestingly, one decorative item found was an Ashanti symbol called the "Sankofa," which carries

the meaning "Return to the Past to Build the Future," which is exactly why historic preservation and the study of history matter. This symbol links the person buried with it to the Ghana-Ivory Coast region of Africa.

Because of the importance of the site, on February 27, 2006, President George W. Bush signed a proclamation establishing the African Burial Ground National Monument in Lower Manhattan, at the corners of Duane and Elk streets. In May 2008, one of four Preserve America Presidential Awards went to the African Burial Ground project. This is the highest federal award for historic preservation that can be bestowed.

[www.africanburialground.gov](http://www.africanburialground.gov)  
[www.schomburgcenter.org](http://www.schomburgcenter.org)





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