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National Register of Historic Places Program: Frequently Asked Questions

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Frequently Asked Questions

- What is the National Register of Historic Places?**
- What are the results of listing?**
- What are the restrictions, rules, and regulations for historic property owners?**
- Can I modify, remodel, or renovate, my historic house?**
- How do I apply for grant money or tax credits?**
- How do I get a plaque?**
- How do I get a copy of the file you have on a property?**
- How is a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places?**
- How can I update information for a property that is already listed?**
- I am pretty sure that a property is listed, but I cannot find it in your database, why is that?**
- How do I contact you, what is your address?**
- How old does a property have to be to qualify for listing?**
- I want to know if a property is listed, how can I do that?**
- I am a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, what can you do for me?**
- I want to use the photographs in your files, is it copyrighted?**
- What are the definitions of some of the terms and acronyms you use?**
- What is the difference between a National Park, a National Monument, a National Memorial, a National Historical Park, etc?**
- What is the preferred method of citation for a National Register of Historic Places nomination file?**
- These FAQs never answer my question, I still have a question**

What is the National Register of Historic Places?
 The National Park Service administers the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. National Register properties have significance to the history of their community state, or the nation. Nominations for listing historic properties come from State Historic Preservation Officers, from Federal Preservation Officers for properties owned or controlled by the United States Government, and from Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for properties on Tribal lands. Private individuals and organizations, local governments, and American Indian tribes often initiate this process and prepare the necessary documentation. A professional review board in each state considers each property proposed for listing and makes a recommendation on its eligibility. National Historic Landmarks are a separate designation, but upon designation, NHLs are listed in the National Register of Historic Places if not already listed. You can find more information in our About Us section. You can find more information on the National Historic Landmarks program at their website.

What are the results of listing?
 In addition to honorific recognition, listing in the National Register has the following results for historic properties:

Consideration in planning for Federal, Federally licensed, and Federally assisted projects: -- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that Federal agencies allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register. The Advisory Council oversees and ensures the consideration of historic properties in the Federal Planning process.

Eligibility for certain tax provisions -- Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings. This credit can be combined with a straight-line depreciation period of 27.5 years for residential property and 31.5 years for nonresidential property for the depreciable basis of the rehabilitated building reduced by the amount of the tax credit claimed. Federal tax

deductions are also available for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial interests in historically important land areas or structures.

Consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface mining permit where coal is located in accordance with the Surface Mining Control Act of 1977; and

Qualification for Federal grants for historic preservation, when funds are available.

Owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose provided that no Federal monies are involved.

You can find more information on the results of being listed on our results page.

What are the restrictions, rules, regulations for historic property owners?

From the Federal perspective (the National Register of Historic Places is part of the National Park Service), a property owner can do whatever they want with their property as long as there are no Federal monies attached to the property. You can find this on our website at:

http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

However, before this occurs, you can, or the property owner should contact the State historic preservation office (SHPO.) The SHPO is the state agency that oversees historic preservation efforts in their state. There may be state or local preservation laws that they should be aware of before they undertake a project with a historic property.

You can find contact information for the SHPOs at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/shpolist.htm>

If Federal monies are attached to the property then any changes to the property have to allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (www.achp.gov) to comment on the project.

You can also read a copy of the National Register of Historic Places code of Federal regulations at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/regulations.htm>

You can also find general information for owners at:

http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

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How do I apply for grant money or tax credits?

The National Register of Historic Places does not have a grant program ourselves. However, Heritage Preservation Services (a different division of the National Park Service, Cultural Resources Program) does have a tax credit program that may be of assistance to you. The website for the tax credit program is:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm>

Additionally, sometimes State historic preservation offices may have state run programs that could help. You can find contact information for the SHPOs at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/shpolist.htm>

How do I get a plaque?

Many sites listed in the National Register arrange for a commemorative plaque. Unfortunately the National Register of Historic Places does not issue plaques as a result of listing; rather we leave it up to the individual owners if they are interested in having one. If you do not have a local trophy/plaque store that you prefer, we know of several companies that advertise in Preservation Magazine that offer the type of plaques that you may be interested in. We recommend that you contact your State historic preservation office to see if they have a preferred plaque style or wording. **We are not endorsing, authorizing, recommending, or implying any connection to any one company over another, including any company not listed here.** We are merely aware that these companies sell plaques. Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are not required to have plaques.

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