



# National Historic Landmarks

ILLUSTRATING THE HERITAGE OF THE UNITED STATES



## National Historic Landmarks make tangible the American experience.

They are places where nationally significant historical events occurred, that are associated with prominent Americans, that represent those pivotal ideas that shaped the nation, that teach us about our ancient past, or that are premier examples of design or construction.

National Historic Landmarks help us to understand nationally significant patterns, movements, and themes in American history, ensuring that the nation's heritage will be accessible to future generations.

While many historic places are important locally or at a state level, a few have meaning for all Americans. National Historic Landmarks are places that “possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States.” They illuminate our rich and complex national story that spans more than 15,000 years, from the earliest native people to the exploration of outer space. The story is there to be told in Presidential homes, in our seafaring



**Alden Dow House and Studio, Midland, Michigan**  
Date of Designation: June 29, 1989

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The architecture of Alden B. Dow received national attention from his very early career through to his late period, because of his association with Frank Lloyd Wright. The body of his work is of rare quality and completeness and remains highly original among the contending forces of 20th century architecture. The house and studio are his most clearly acknowledged masterpiece.

*Photo courtesy of the Alden B. Dow Archives, n.d.*

vessels and aids to navigation, on battlefields, at pueblo ruins and earthen mounds, in industrial facilities, in historic towns and communities, and in architecture and engineering structures.

In 1935, the U.S. Congress charged the Department of the Interior with the responsibility for designating nationally significant historic sites, buildings, and objects and promoting their preservation for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States. **The National Historic Landmarks Program** was established to identify and protect places possessing exceptional value in illustrating the nation's heritage. Only 3% of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are designated as National Historic Landmarks.

The National Park Service administers the National Historic Landmarks Program for the Secretary of the Interior. It is a cooperative endeavor of government agencies, professionals, and independent organizations sharing knowledge with the Service and working jointly to identify and preserve these exceptional places.



# National Historic Landmarks Program

## How Are National Historic Landmarks Designated?

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**National Historic Landmarks may be nominated through broad, organized initiatives called theme studies**, which are authorized by the U.S. Congress and examine related places linked by a single subject or theme. Or they may be identified through historic context studies or special studies. The National Park Service often conducts National Historic Landmark studies in partnership with federal, state, tribal, or local preservation officials; the academic community; independent scholars; interested parties; and others knowledgeable about a particular subject. The National Park Service's National Historic Landmarks Program staff in the Washington, DC and Regional Offices prepares nominations, advises others on their preparation, and evaluates potential National Historic Landmark nominees for their ability to meet specific criteria.

Once a nomination is completed, owners, public officials, and interested parties are given an opportunity to comment on National Historic Landmark nominations. Private owners of potential National Historic Landmarks are given the opportunity to concur with or object to their designation. The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board reviews the nomination and makes recommendations to the full Board. The nomination is then forwarded to the Board for review and recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary considers the recommendations and makes the designation.





↑ **Leap-the-Dips, Altoona, Pennsylvania**  
Date of Designation: June 19, 1996

Built in 1902, Leap-The-Dips is the world's oldest operating wooden roller coaster and North America's last surviving side friction roller coaster. After standing idle for 14 years, the roller coaster was renovated and reopened in 1999. *Photo courtesy of Lakemont Park, n.d.*

↓ **Charles W. Morgan (Bark), Mystic, Connecticut**  
Date of Designation: November 13, 1966

Built and launched in 1841 in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the *Morgan* is the last of America's square-rigged wooden whaling vessels. She made her last whaling voyage in 1921. The *Morgan* sailed in pursuit of whales for almost 80 years, killing more than 2,500 whales and bringing more than 50,000 barrels of oil to port. *Photo courtesy of Mystic Seaport, n.d.*





### Erie Canal, Montgomery County, New York

Date of Designation: October 9, 1960

A remarkable engineering feat of the day, the Erie Canal drastically cut transportation costs between the Eastern Seaboard and the western wilderness, stimulating increased settlement in western New York and areas further west. Aqueducts, such as the Schoharie Viaduct pictured here, carried canal water above lower level streams. *Photo courtesy of the Historic American Engineering Record, n.d.*

## What Does National Historic Landmark Designation Mean?

- National Historic Landmark designation recognizes properties that are nationally significant to the nation as a whole.
- National Historic Landmarks are automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Owners of National Historic Landmarks are free to manage their property as they choose, but projects potentially affecting landmarks are subject to official review if they involve federal licensing, permitting, or funding.
- Federal agencies whose projects affect a National Historic Landmark must give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.



## gnation Mean?

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- Owners of National Historic Landmarks may be able to obtain federal historic preservation funding when funds are available. Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation and other provisions may apply.
- A bronze plaque bearing the name of the National Historic Landmark and attesting to its national significance may be presented to the owner upon request.

Most National Historic Landmarks are owned by private individuals or groups. Others are owned by local, state, tribal, or federal government agencies, or have mixed public-private ownership.

# National Historic Landmarks Assistance

The National Park Service promotes the preservation of National Historic Landmarks through technical assistance to their stewards – owners, managers, and friends groups – and education of the general public about the importance of National Historic Landmarks. The National Park Service works with partners such as other federal agencies, state governments, Indian tribes, local governments, colleges and universities, private organizations and individuals, and nonprofit organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Foundation, and the National Parks Conservation Association, to educate and assist the public in preserving its national heritage.

## In providing assistance, the National Park Service works to:

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- Ensure the long-term preservation of National Historic Landmarks.
- Provide technical support and assistance to owners, managers, and friends groups of National Historic Landmarks.
- Build partnerships between the National Park Service and other federal agencies; state, tribal, and local governments; nonprofit organizations; and individuals to enhance the protection of these unique places.
- Educate the public about National Historic Landmarks to build support for their protection and that of the nation's heritage.
- Teach the stories inherent in these important resources.





### Little Tokyo Historic District, Los Angeles, California

Date of Designation: June 12, 1995

At its height prior to World War II, Little Tokyo was home to 30,000 Japanese in Los Angeles. Today it remains as the cultural center for Japanese Americans in Los Angeles and one of only three surviving Japantowns in the United States. *Photo courtesy of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles, 1993.*



### Morrow Plots, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois

Date of Designation: May 23, 1968

Established in 1876, the Morrow Plots, located in the heart of the campus of the University of Illinois, are the oldest agricultural research fields in the United States and include the longest-term continuous corn plot in the world. Research conducted on the Morrow Plots provides important information on the effect of crop rotation and the impact of organic and chemical nutrients on plant yield. *Photo courtesy of the Department of Crop Sciences, College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois, 1992.*



## What Are Endangered Landmarks?

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Unfortunately, at any moment, some 2.3% of designated National Historic Landmarks are at risk for destruction or loss. The federal government has no power to compel owners to maintain their property, even if it is important to our national heritage. Deterioration is a major threat to National Historic Landmarks. Other threats include demolition, natural disasters, commercial and residential development pressure, inappropriate alterations, and vandalism. Threats such as these destroy the historic character of National Historic Landmarks and their ability to convey nationally significant stories.

The National Historic Landmarks Program continually monitors the condition of National Historic Landmarks and maintains an assessment of threatened Landmarks on the NHL website.



### Kinishba Ruins, Gila County, Arizona

Date of Designation: July 19, 1964

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This partially reconstructed complex on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation consisted originally of a large pueblo that contained two large and seven small masonry structures. During its peak population, ca. 1300, it may have housed a population of 1,000. The inhabitants, who abandoned the site in about 1400, represented a blend of Mongollon and Anasazi cultures. *National Park Service photo, n.d.*

### Kalaupapa Leprosy Settlement, Molokai, Hawaii

Date of Designation: January 7, 1976

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The Kalaupapa Leprosy Settlement in Molokai, Hawaii, was established in 1866 to address the epidemic among native Hawaiians. The grave for Father Damien marks the final resting place of the Belgian priest who volunteered to minister at the leper colony on the remote northern peninsula of Molokai. In 1889, Fr. Damien died a victim of the disease. Today, this property is part of the Kalaupapa National Historical Park. *Photo courtesy of the Historic American Buildings Survey, Jack E. Boucher, photographer, 1991.*



## How Can You Help?

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Nothing can replace the experience of being in the authentic historic settings where our national history was shaped. No replica conveys an authentic connection with historic places and our collective past. National Historic Landmarks are the actual places where the nation can experience its history firsthand. You help preserve National Historic Landmarks when you:

- Visit those National Historic Landmarks that are open to the public across the nation and discover the stories in these places.
- Become familiar with historic preservation issues and techniques.
- Teach young people the value of preserving historic resources as a tangible way to understand the history of the United States. Ask your local schools to do the same.
- Attend local planning meetings to ensure that decision makers acknowledge and protect National Historic Landmarks as important historic places and tourist sites.
- Join your local, statewide, and national historic preservation organizations and become involved in the founding of a National Historic Landmarks friends group.
- Volunteer at a National Historic Landmark.
- Support historic preservation initiatives through newspaper editorials and at events and community meetings.

# Contacts

To find out more about the National Historic Landmarks Program, visit the National Park Service's Cultural Resources web sites or contact one of the offices listed here.

**National Historic Landmarks Program:**

[www.nps.gov/nhl/](http://www.nps.gov/nhl/)

**National Park Service Cultural Resources:**

[www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history)

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**Alaska Regional Office**

National Park Service  
240 W. 5th Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 644-3470  
AK

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**Intermountain Regional Office**

National Park Service  
12795 W. Alameda Pkwy  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-0287  
(303) 969-2882  
AZ, CO, MT, NM, OK, TX, UT, WY

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**Midwest Regional Office**

National Park Service  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, NE 68102-4226  
(402) 661-1910  
AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI

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**Northeast Regional Office**

National Park Service  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 597-1578  
CT, DE, DC, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV



**Central City/Blackhawk Historic District, Gilpin County, Colorado**  
Date of Designation: July 4, 1961

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The Central City/Blackhawk Historic District is at the heart of one of the richest mining areas of the Rocky Mountain West. It was the discovery of gold here, in 1859, which triggered the great Pike's Peak gold rush. The District encompasses hundreds of buildings, including rare examples of mining camp-era wooden structures and the famed Central City Opera House. *National Park Service photo, S. Evans, photographer, 1986.*



**Big Hidatsa Village Site, Mercer County, North Dakota**  
Date of Designation: July 19, 1964

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Occupied from about 1740 to 1850, this was the largest of three Hidatsa villages near the mouth of the Knife River and Fort Mandan, and the 1804-1805 winter headquarters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Comprising approximately 120 circular earthlodges, Big Hidatsa Village is thought to contain the best defined earthlodge impressions of any major Native American site in the Great Plains. *National Park Service photo, courtesy of Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, n.d.*





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**Pacific West Regional Office – San Francisco**

National Park Service

333 Bush Street, Suite 500

San Francisco, CA 94104-2828

(415) 623-2368

CA, HI, NV, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau

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**Pacific West Regional Office – Seattle**

909 First Avenue

Seattle, WA 98104-1060

(206) 220-4133

ID, OR, WA

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**Southeast Regional Office**

National Park Service

Atlanta Federal Center

1924 Building

100 Alabama Street, S.W.

Atlanta, GA 30303

(404) 507-5792

SER\_NHL@nps.gov

AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands

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**National Historic Landmarks Program**

National Park Service

Washington Area Service Office

1201 Eye Street, N.W., 8th Fl.

Washington, DC 20005

(202) 354-2211

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This material is partially based upon work conducted under a cooperative agreement between the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers and the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

## Front cover:

### **Nevada Northern Railway, East Ely Yards, Ely, Nevada**

Date of Designation: September 20, 2006

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Established in 1905 to support the area's booming copper mining industry, the Nevada Northern Railway's East Ely Facility is exemplary of steam-era rail yards that maintained and repaired the nation's rail traffic. However, the dieselization of the railroad industry during the second half of the 20th century led to major alterations or demolition of railroad yards and shops nationwide. Amazingly, East Ely survived that era unscathed, and it remains essentially unaltered by modern upgrades or demolitions. East Ely, with its depots, offices, shops, yards, motive power, and rolling stock, represents the best preserved, least altered, and most complete main yard complex of a historic standard gauge, common carrier, steam-powered railroad in the United States.

*Photo courtesy of the Nevada Northern Railway Museum, 2006.*

### **Twelfth Street YMCA Building, Washington, D.C.**

Date of Designation: October 12, 1994

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Dedicated on May 12, 1912, the Twelfth Street YMCA Building in Washington, D.C., was the home of the nation's first African-American chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Designed by African-American architect William Sidney Pittman, it came to be known as the "Bowmen Y" after Anthony Bowmen, who founded the black "Y" movement in the United States in 1853. *Photo courtesy of the Historic American Buildings Survey, Dynecourt Mahon, photographer, 1979.*

### **Ryman Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee**

Date of Designation: January 3, 2001

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As the most famous home of the Grand Ole Opry, the Ryman Auditorium is called the Mother Church of Country Music. The Opry's live shows and radio programs greatly influenced the evolution of country music. *Photo courtesy of Gaylord Entertainment, n.d.*

### **The Voorlezer's House, Staten Island, New York**

Date of Designation: November 5, 1961

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This house was constructed by the early Dutch settlers before 1696 to serve as a church, a school, and the residence of the *voorlezer*, the layman chosen to assist the Pastor in the church services and keep the church records. In addition to his religious duties, he often conducted school in which elementary reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious catechism were taught. It is considered to be the oldest elementary school building in the country.

*Photo courtesy of the National Historic Landmarks Program, R. E. Greenwood, photographer, 1975.*

## Back cover:

### **Cleveland Arcade, Cleveland, Ohio**

Date of Designation: May 15, 1975

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When the Cleveland Arcade was built in 1890, it was the embodiment of the grandeur of the Industrial Age. However, over the years it fell into disrepair. In 2001, it was rehabilitated and reopened as a hotel and shopping center.

*Photo courtesy of Historic American Buildings Survey, Martin Linsey, photographer, 1966.*



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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