

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RESTORATION POLICY STATEMENT

*National Park Service, U. S. Department of
Interior. Approved by Conrad L. Wirth, Director.*

There follows the restoration policies, recommended by the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments, adopted by the National Park Service on May 19, 1937, and still in effect.

A. General Restoration Policy:

"The motives governing these activities are several, often conflicting: aesthetic, archeological and scientific, and educational. Each has its values and its disadvantages.

Educational motives often suggest complete reconstitution, as in their heyday, of vanished, ruinous or remodelled buildings and remains. This has often been regarded as requiring removal of subsequent additions, and has involved incidental destruction of much archeological and historical evidence, as well as of aesthetic values arising from age and picturesqueness.

The demands of scholarship for the preservation of every vestige of architectural and archeological evidence—desirable in itself—might, if rigidly satisfied, leave the monument in a condition which gives the public little idea of its major historical aspect or importance.

In aesthetic regards, the claims of unity or original form or intention, of variety of style in successive periods of building and remodelling, and of present beauty of texture and weathering may not always be wholly compatible.

In attempting to reconcile these claims and motives, the ultimate guide must be the tact and judgment of the men in charge. Certain observations may, however, be of assistance to them.

(1) No final decision should be taken as to a course of action before reasonable efforts to exhaust the archeological and documentary evidence as to the form and successive transformations of the monument.

(2) Complete record of such evidence, by drawings, notes and transcripts should be kept, and in no case should evidence offered by the monument itself be destroyed or covered up before it has been fully recorded.

(3) It is well to bear in mind the saying: 'Better preserve than repair, better repair than restore, better restore than construct'.

(4) It is ordinarily better to retain genuine old work of several periods, rather than arbitrarily to 'restore' the whole, by new work, to its aspect at a single period.

(5) This applies even to work of periods later than those now admired, provided their work represents a genuine creative effort.

(6) In no case should our own artistic preferences or prejudices lead us to modify, on aesthetic grounds, work of a by-gone period representing other artistic tastes. Truth is not only stranger than fiction, but more varied and more interesting as well as more honest.

(7) Where missing features are to be replaced without sufficient evidence as to their own original form, due regard should be paid to the factors of period and region in other surviving examples of the same time and locality.

(8) Every reasonable additional care and expense are justified to approximate in new work the materials, methods and quality of old construction, but new work should not be artificially 'antiqued' by theatrical means.

(9) Work on the preservation and restoration of old buildings requires a slower pace than would be expected in new construction."

B. Battlefield Area Restoration Policy.

"Consideration of a proper restoration policy for historical areas raises many important problems. Not the least of these is the proper application of such a policy to national battlefield areas. Those areas offer conditions not usually present in other historical sites and the problem is more immediate in view of the present rapid development program.

In a sense a wise policy might better be described as one of stabilization rather than restoration. Stabilization embraces necessary restoration without subordinating to it the entire physical development program.

It is convenient to discuss the problem in two parts, the elements usually presented in a battlefield area when the National Park Service takes it over, but before any development program has been initiated; and the successive steps in a sound stabilization program.

I. When the National Park Service takes over a military area, it usually consists of the following elements:

A. What was there when the battle was fought, including evidences of the battle, such as earthworks, cleared fields, ruined foundations, etc.

B. Subsequent additions, including forest growth, modern buildings, monuments, and markers. Some of these subsequent additions, such as the intrusions of unsightly and modern structures, have been injurious to the appearance of the area. Other additions, however, have improved it. For example forest growth of 75 years frequently is a desirable witness to the age and the dignity of a battlefield area and fortifies the impression upon those visiting the area.

II. To stabilize conditions on a battlefield area after it is taken over, the following policies are hereby approved

A. Undesirable modern encroachments on the battlefield scene shall be eliminated as soon as practicable. Not everything that has occurred since the battle can be considered an encroachment. Obviously, modern structures and intrusions which have been due to other than natural conditions and which introduce a jarring note rather than contribute to the normal

accretions of age are the elements which should be eliminated. These include modern buildings, high-speed highways, gas stations, transmission lines, and other obviously incongruous elements. Normal forest growth, the natural changes of stream channel, the operation of other natural processes which seem destined never to be controlled, should not be eliminated.

B. Having eliminated undesirable encroachments, those features of the area which hamper a clear understanding of the engagement also should be eliminated. For example, where forest growth has obstructed an important vista or where a road location conveys a mistaken notion of troop movements, that feature should be modified or eliminated for educational reasons.

C. Restoration, which seems advisable to aid understanding and to restore the natural landscape for clearing and naturally representing the battlefield area, should be made as funds therefor are obtained. Such restorations may be made for structures, earthworks, plant growth, etc. It is recognized that, in each case of restoration, there is present a danger of introducing an artificial element into what had been previously a natural scene. Natural processes should be allowed to operate and dignify with age the natural scene.

The foregoing policies should aid in developing a battlefield area to provide a combination of elements remaining from the time of the battle, plus the normal additions of age effected through the natural accretion of natural processes. When a battlefield area has been so treated as to represent this combination, it can be said to be 'stabilized'."

C. Sample Restoration Policy

"The Advisory Board approves the guiding policy of the treatment of the Morristown camp site, in accordance with which the restoration of only a very small number of representative structures is attempted, and expresses its opposition to any attempt at complete or large-scale restoration of such sites, especially where the building of structures is involved."

