



# Foundation Document Overview

## Martin Van Buren National Historic Site

New York



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The purpose of MARTIN VAN BUREN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve Lindenwald so present and future generations of visitors will have an opportunity to learn about the life and public career of President Martin Van Buren and find meaning in the issues facing America during the formative years of the republic through the turbulent decades leading to the Civil War.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Martin Van Buren National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Martin Van Buren (1782–1862), eighth president of the United States from 1837 to 1841, was a dominant figure in antebellum politics and a primary architect of the American political party system. He was a contender for the Democratic nomination in 1844 and the presidential candidate in 1848 for the Free Soil Party, the first mass antislavery party in the United States.
- Lindenwald reflected Van Buren’s interest in progressive farming and his political beliefs, which emphasized the value of agriculture and free labor to the future of democracy. Located in Kinderhook, New York, the rural Dutch village where he was born and raised, Lindenwald was the only home Van Buren ever owned. He returned there after his presidential term, becoming a key figure in the reorientation of the national debate around the issue of slavery.



Martin Van Buren's Lindenwald farm about 1850. Drawn by Steven N. Patricia, R.A.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Historic structures (Lindenwald, South Gatehouse, and Farm Cottage)**
- **Lindenwald cultural landscape, historic core, and historic farmlands**
- **Museum collections**
- **Van Buren-era archeological sites**
- **Scenic value**

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Natural resources**
- **Agricultural soils**
- **Non-Van Buren-era archeological resources**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Martin Van Buren’s experiences at Lindenwald illuminate the struggles of America’s second generation of political leaders as they contended with the sectionalism that led to the Civil War. In particular, it was at Lindenwald where Martin Van Buren pursued his post-presidential political career and became an important figure in the political debate over slavery leading up to the Civil War. Topics in this interpretive theme include: right to vote, rise of the “common man,” land ownership, abolitionism and slavery, Mexican War / United States expansion, and states’ rights.
- Martin Van Buren was a primary architect of the current political party system that continues to shape American political life. He helped pioneer a new politics that replaced leadership by gentlemen of “property and standing” with electoral politics based on party organization, grassroots organizing, and popular appeals. Topics in this interpretive theme include: Martin Van Buren as a professional politician, workings of the constitutional government, and The Albany Regency.
- The Lindenwald farm was a reflection of the social and economic issues influencing Van Buren’s life. Lindenwald was an expression of Martin Van Buren’s political beliefs, which emphasized the importance of agriculture to the future of democracy. On land located in his ancestral community, Van Buren advocated agriculture improvements and employed a diverse farm and household labor force. The Lindenwald farm reflected the complex social changes that characterized the antebellum period and energized the Democratic Party, including mass immigration and the development of a market economy. Topics in this interpretive theme include: market economy, mass immigration, sectional divisions, agricultural technology, mass production, religion, and Van Buren’s relationship to Kinderhook.

## Description

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site was established by an act of Congress (Public Law 93-486) on October 26, 1974, to commemorate the life and work of the eighth president of the United States. After serving one term, Van Buren moved back to his native Kinderhook, New York, where he had purchased Lindenwald. While continuing to remain active in politics, he devoted much of his time to overseeing the operation of the farm. Lindenwald was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1961 and a National Historic Site in 1974 at which time the site was administratively listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The List of Classified Structures includes the Lindenwald mansion, South Gatehouse, the North Gatehouse foundation, the well cap, and the carriage path. The current list is due for an update because neither the Farm Cottage nor the Old Post Road are currently included.

The centerpiece of the property is Lindenwald, a 1797 Federal-style house with fine interior woodwork and decorative details. During Van Buren's tenure, the mansion underwent several alterations culminating in an addition and brick tower in the Italianate style designed by Richard Upjohn, who popularized the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles in mid-19th-century America. The cultural landscape that comprises the park's historic core retains integrity in setting, design, and location, contributing to the understanding of Van Buren's life at Lindenwald.

The authorized boundary originally embraced a total of 39.55 acres: 21.07 acres held in fee by the National Park Service and an additional 18.24 acres protected through conservation easements. Another 0.24 acre remained in private ownership within the boundary. The boundary was expanded from 39.55 acres to 295.53 acres through its inclusion in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11). With the boundary expansion, the National Park Service owns 44.53 acres in fee simple and holds protective easements on 18.24 acres. The Open Space Institute holds a conservation easement on 101.89 acres owned by Roxbury Farm (a biodynamic farm operated as a Community Supported Agriculture facility). The Open Space Institute intends to donate this easement to the National Park Service. The Open Space Institute also owns three parcels with 59.74 acres, which carry a conservation easement. Also within the park boundary are 71.13 acres of inholdings, which are owned by private parties and one which is owned by the Town of Kinderhook. Five of the privately owned parcels carry conservation easements. These parcels are in agricultural use and are zoned for that purpose.

